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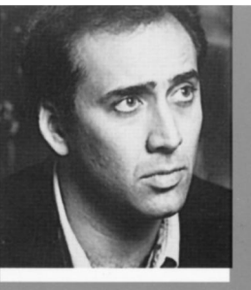

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Number 4
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Printed in USA

Type
TechType
Richmond, CA

Printing
Allen Press
Lawrence, KS

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Film Quarterly (ISSN 0015-1386) is published quarterly by the University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 94720. Second class postage paid at Berkeley, California, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian GST #R122058662. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Film Quarterly, University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, California 94720.

Subscriptions are $23 per year for individuals, $49 per year for institutions. Subscribers outside the U.S., add $6 for postage. Single issues are $5.75 for individuals, $13 for institutions. Domestic claims for nonreceipt of issues should be made within 90 days of the month of publication, overseas claims within 180 days. Overseas delivery is not guaranteed.

Subscription requests and requests for advertising rate cards should be sent to the Journals Department, manuscript enquiries to the Editor, Film Quarterly, at the University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, California 94720. Unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1994. ∞

Back issues subsequent to Volume 18 (1965-66) write to the University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, California 94720. ♻ This journal is printed on recycled paper. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors only.
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Beyond the New Wave

The 1980s marked a distinct period of transition for auteurist film-making in France, where it had dominated a significant segment of production since the late 1950s. In a shift that some say has been to the detriment of narrative content, auterist production and aesthetic practices were rejected in favor of a more concentrated study of the image and its composition. Four well-known figures in contemporary French film-making here discuss their participation in and opinions of French cinema from the 1960s to the present day. These interviews were conducted in cinema's centennial year and shortly after the GATT negotiations between the United States and Europe, in which the status of cinema as a cultural commodity was hotly debated.

Philippe Carcassonne, executive producer at Cinéa since the mid-1980s, has established his position as a prominent figure in French production with films that embrace the artistic goals of the filmmaker without losing sight of the marketplace. His productions include *Monsieur Hire* (dir. Patrice Leconte), *Un coeur en hiver* (dir. Claude Sautet), *Prospero's Books* (dir. Peter Greenaway), and *Carrington* (dir. Christopher Hampton), as well as the recent Wim Wenders/Michelangelo Antonioni film, *Par-delà les nuages*.

Since the 1970s, Margaret Ménégoz has been director of production at Les Films du Losange, the production company founded by Eric Rohmer and Barbet Schroeder that is now recognized as an icon of the French New Wave. Under her direction, the company has become a focus for experimental narrative cinema and a reference point in Europe for auteur film-making. Among others, Wenders, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Marguerite Duras, Andrzej Wajda, Volker Schlöndorff, Agnieszka Holland, and Eric Rohmer himself have made films under the aegis of Losange.

Bruno Nuytten began his career as one of the most sought-after directors of photography in the 1970s and 80s; his cinematography for Duras, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Claude Berri, and Bertrand Blier garnered him international recognition. He then turned to directing: the critically acclaimed *Camille Claudel* (1988) was followed by *Albert souffre* (1991).

Sheila Steeples & Allen Katona

Four Perspectives on French Cinema

Producer Gérard Vaugeois, respected by many as the symbolic leader of French underground and experimental cinema, is the founder of Les Films de l'Atalante, a production company that handles its own production and distribution as well as running its own theaters in Paris. Vaugeois is a strong supporter of auteur film-making and independent production; he probably maintains the most socialist politics of production of the four interviewees. He is responsible for the distribution in France of films by Greenaway, Satyajit Ray, Milos Forman, and Derek Jarman, among others.

[These interviews, conducted separately in Paris by Allen Katona and Sheila Steeples, have been edited together according to theme. They are part of the forthcoming *Currents in Contemporary French Cinema*. Ed.]

Allen Katona & Sheila Steeples: How did you start out in your career in film?

BRUNO NUYTTEN: My real beginnings were at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, when I was participating in a fairly active movement which consisted of finding a new film form that would be different from that of the War and post-War years. This rupture [with film form] was linked to the New Wave. I applied to IDHEC [Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques] and failed, but was then accepted at a film school in Brussels that had just been founded by, among others, the Belgian film-maker André Delvaux and the director of photography Ghislain Cloquet [1924–1981, photographer for Louis Malle, Arthur Penn, and Robert Bresson, and on Roman Polanski's *Tess*]. They had tried to recreate the structure of the Polish film schools, and therefore developed a very avant-garde style, very different from the French film schools of the time. I ended up becoming Cloquet's protégé, and my interest in lighting developed from this time.

When I came back to France, I was very much in demand as director of photography on short films, but Cloquet wanted me to work as assistant director of photography on features. I was quickly disappointed, since studio films didn't really interest me and the crews on these films weren't part of the new generation. But on the other hand, the young film-makers in underground cinema at the time were lost—they were imitating the work of Philippe Garrel [personal, psycho-existential dramas on virtually no budget], who was at the time the uncontested master of French

underground cinema. I didn't really feel comfortable in either style, since I found that both had extremist qualities. But I had a better time working with the "nuts" than with the professionals. I began to hope that I would meet people who were more structured, "structured" meaning those who had an intellectual link, like André Téchiné (who was then a critic for *Cahiers du cinéma*), or like Marguerite Duras, who wanted to go into film-making after her literary successes with works like *Hiroshima mon amour*. I was learning the craft at the same time that Téchiné and Duras were discovering directing.

PHILIPPE CARCASSONNE: I'd always been a film enthusiast, participating in the film clubs in my high school, and later at university. Then I was editor-in-chief of the film review *Cinématographe* for five or six years. Around this time, I met a certain number of directors and when the occasion to produce came up, I called them to try to launch a few projects together. Afterward, I became executive producer of a new production company, Cinéa.

GERARD VAUGEOIS: I had always gone to the cinema since I was very young, and then joined a film club, where I saw two films that set it off, *Nosferatu* by Murnau, and Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*. I quickly found a job as a journalist and program director for movie theaters. In the 1970s, I created, with a few other people, the system of municipal theaters that showed experimental films. At the same time, I went into criticism, principally writing for the paper *L'Humanité* [newspaper of France's Communist Party]. In 1980, I founded my production company, Les Films de l'Atalante.

MARGARET MENEGOZ: Before coming to Films du Losange, I did a little of everything in film—production assistant, assistant director, assistant camera, assistant editor, production director for documentaries and telefilms. Then it changed for a very simple professional reason: When I had children, I had to find a way to stay closer to home, after having taken off on a phone call to go do a documentary, traveling the world to work on films. So I came to Paris to look for a job, and I met Eric Rohmer and Barbet Schroeder. They had a production company of two auteurs, and they basically needed a secretary. I started to work here as that secretary. Then Barbet asked me if we couldn't write up a long-term contract, and I said, No, listen, this is a small production company and if something goes on that I don't like, I'll leave, whether I have a contract or not. So he asked me if I wanted to be the manager and I said yes. Then after one or two years of management, I held a meeting with both of them and said, Look, I'm making money for the company, we might have a profit to share, we have to do something about this. . . .

That was 1979. . . .

MENEGOZ: Yes. That's how we became associates—very practically, very simply. But in the beginning, it was just two auteurs who simply wanted to make films and needed someone to manage it all.

Could you all talk about some collaborative experiences that have been important to you professionally? Perhaps, Bruno Nuytten, you could mention Marguerite Duras, since she is particular in the sense that she was the first to "translate" the abstract act of writing into an act of film-making in terms of a visual concept. At the same time, you began in features with the idea of cinema "technique."

NUYTTEN: This is in fact where the experience with Duras was somewhat strange. I started as an assistant camera person on her film *Jaune le soleil*, and very quickly began working in close contact with her. Then she decided to hire me as director of photography and I did my first feature with her, *La femme du Ganges* [1972].

Duras's attitude toward the crew and the actors consisted of "enchanting" everyone with the story she wanted to tell. She thought, a little naively, that the whole crew and everyone who worked with her was perfectly familiar with her literary work, which was not at all my case. She constantly referred to elements in her own work, and everything became self-referential. She adapted her film scripts from one day to the next, as there were never any prepared scripts in Marguerite Duras's film-making. She already had very firm viewpoints regarding extremist author cinema as waged in intellectual war against all forms of commercial and entertainment film-making.

On *India Song* [1974], we worked enormously on lighting, since all the film's shots were stationary; once the camera was aimed at an aspect of the set, the lighting was done while Duras was working on fixing the characters in space. It was a very open method of looking for something together. Marguerite never wanted to touch the camera and its technique. There were often totally still shots where the camera never moved. I controlled the angle with the lens and put a chatterton on the ground to represent the camera lens angle.

Her films were shot very quickly, since the shoots

only lasted two weeks on average—I worked on a few Duras films that were shot in three days. But you can work quickly when there are shot sequences that last ten minutes, and it's very easy to edit afterward.

I was sort of half in love, which was why I continued to work on her films. Duras's films were for me the reward that I got between the commercial films that I worked on before and after. I actually had two rewards: the language of Duras as transcription of a writer into film, and the language of Téchiné in terms of film-making experimentation.

I also discovered the reward of the text communicated through the actors with Bertrand Blier, which complemented the highly intellectual films along the lines of the New Wave that I made with Téchiné, whereas Duras was closer to underground film-making in experimentation with image and sound.

Didn't you also work with Jean-Luc Godard?

NUYTTEN: Working with him [in 1985, on *Détective*] was a great trial, so great that it completely washed me out. It was a violent meeting, with Godard both bringing me into the project and rejecting me. He reigned on the set with enormous authority and didn't want anyone to be reassured. He publicly used me and broke me on the set, but since the experience was close to a certain purity in film-making, I decided not to react. It upset him and forced him to take a more violent attitude toward me. It must be added that all the crew and the actors who worked with Godard in the 1980s were terrified by the myth surrounding Jean-Luc Godard; they put him on a pedestal, and this really irritated him. I doubtless made the same mistake, by having this attitude of looking up to him. I tried to handle the shoot well, which is what he reproached me for. The fact that I accepted the situation such as he had created it, meaning conflictual, made him almost nasty, since that is not what he wanted.

Godard was at the time, and still is today, seeking a visual form for his films that is as minimalist as possible. When you watch a Godard film, this is its primary interest. This is for me the great art of Godard's modern films: minimal technique to achieve an extreme wealth of intellectual possibilities.

How would you characterize your collaboration with film-makers at Losange, Margaret Ménégoz?

MENEGOZ: It's a question of assuring the supplies they need. Auteurs need to be assured of their needs, they need someone who will organize where they film, with what money they film, when they film and also someone to organize the finances—financing the production, the film, and the care of their film for the next five, six, seven years.

We were talking before the interview about the fact that there are some producers who maintain a sense of humility in relation to what they are doing when making a film.

Jean-Luc Godard on the set of *Détective*

MENEGOZ: It's true. It's not just about being humble, it's about being able to obtain an extreme level of efficiency with an auteur. An auteur needs much more than just having his needs met. It's being efficient, precise, and bankable—and all this for the auteur. At Losange, everything has always been rooted in the choice of the auteur, which is really how it is in the film industry everywhere. An auteur writes a story and the production unfolds from there, the technical work, the actors, the distributors, everyone.

The first link in the chain is the auteur. We don't rely on film stars to launch a project because we're a production company of auteurs and their projects are the basis of everything we do. When Barbet Schroeder decided to go work in the U.S., and asked Charles Bukowski to write a script [*Barfly*], it took eight years between the script and the actual production of the film. At that time, what it meant was that there was one less auteur in the company, since Barbet had chosen to make the U.S. his goal. Up until that point, Barbet had directed all his films in France, with the exception of *Idi Amin Dada. . . .*

Which was produced in Luxembourg—why?

MENEGOZ: Censorship was very strict in France then, and the government could censor not only a film's distribution, but its export as well. Since the film was about drug problems, the risks were too great. It was a production tactic.

Getting back to producing a film at Losange. . . .

MENEGOZ: As Losange is a production company of auteurs, every franc earned by a *film d'auteur* is made available for the production of the next film. Every auteur has an account with accrued funds, which can be difficult to manage. A film can always be a failure even if it's well done, but we always have to ensure that the next film can be made even if the preceding film was a commercial failure. So we developed this accounting system for each auteur, which means that when we want to work with someone new, the existing auteurs must agree to donate a certain sum from their own accounts for the film to be made. It's extremely difficult to do because an auteur always fears that his next film may fail, and also needs the money, not for personal reasons, but to be able to take time to write, to work on the next film. Otherwise, [in order to produce a film for a new auteur], we have to raise the money from outside the company, and if it's a big budget film, it's impossible to find the financing.

What has your experience been working with Eric Rohmer?

MENEGOZ: Rohmer has a remarkable and admirable working system. He is the only auteur whose films earn more money in the foreign market than in France. He has refined and perfected this system year after year. He's been very coherent in the course of his work—from the mise-en-scène through the distribution—for the 20 or 30 years he has been making films.

There are two schools of thought concerning

Emmanuelle Chaulet and Eric Viellard in Eric Rohmer's *L'ami de mon amie*

Rohmer—those who say that he continually evolves and those who say that he basically makes the same film over and over and hasn't really accomplished anything new in some time.

MENEGOZ: I've often heard that, but I don't think it's either case. I think he is someone who digs, in his own field. I don't know what his limits are, but he is based in this field.

We could say also that he has created his own kind of economic approach through his outlook and philosophy, in knowing that if he makes a film for a certain budget, he'll have his regular following in the audience plus a few more.

MENEGOZ: Yes, this is the price of his independence, and also where his freedom lies.

A freedom that he's earned artistically as well, on the basis of his talent.

MENEGOZ: And also because he has adapted an economic system to this freedom. In other words, his premise is, "This is the story I've written. If there's enough money, we'll do it in 35 mm. If there's not enough money, we'll do it in 16mm. If that won't work, we'll shoot in 8mm. If we can only have the camera for a weekend, we'll do it in a weekend. It doesn't change the story I've written." The cost of a film is decided by the story you tell.

So then L'ami de mon amie *[*Boyfriends and Girlfriends, *1987] is very similar to* Le rayon vert *[*Summer, *1986], financially speaking.*

MENEGOZ: No, it's very different. *L'ami de mon amie* was a story shot in 35mm, whereas *Le rayon vert* was an experiment in 16mm, more or less unsuccessful, with no written script. The idea was to shoot it in 16mm as a rough copy, to see what would happen and then if it were any good, to make the real film in 35mm. When the rough copy was finished, it was obvious that we shouldn't make it in 35mm.

Philippe Carcassonne, what is your view of your role as producer?

CARCASSONNE: I have a relatively strict vision of my job, and I restrict the nature of the productions I do. We produce only feature fiction films, no television, no videos, no advertising. I have a hard enough time producing what we do produce in the best way possible. I could basically define what I do in three concepts. One, I identify projects that I find interesting and appealing, and that have commercial viability. I'm not looking for total commercial success—I try to study the risks and how big the failure could be if the project doesn't work, and if the company can absorb any kind of commercial catastrophe. Two, I find the financial backing. Three, I manage the operational production of a film according to its best artistic and economic interests. There are other producers who work according to a policy that extends beyond that. I've coproduced films with people who are very comfortable in the postproduction phase, handling the press and so on. But I personally have neither the talent nor the desire to become involved in this aspect.

What are your criteria for choosing which projects to work on or people to work with?

CARCASSONNE: I generally have three criteria. First, to be good enough friends with them that calling to launch a project does not seem impromptu. Second, that what they do is interesting. Third, that they be well known enough that working with them will not create any other problems professionally. So when I was starting, I called Patrice Leconte [*Tandem*, 1987; *Monsieur Hire*, 1989; *Le mari de la coiffeuse/The Hairdresser's Husband*, 1991], André Téchiné [*Les innocents*, 1987; *Ma saison préférée*, 1993], and Claude Sautet [*Quelques jours avec moi*, 1988; *Un coeur en hiver*, 1992], and it developed from there.

How would you relate your conception of the producer's role to your experience with the making of, say, Monsieur Hire*?*

CARCASSONNE: It was very simple. We were talking to the director, Patrice Leconte, during a lunch meeting, about the problem of remakes. I thought it was senseless to do remakes, or that they should only be made of films that are either unknown or were underestimated at their release. We started talking about Julien Duvivier, not about his classic films like *Pépé le Moko*, but more obscure films like *Panique*. Patrice Leconte said he would very much like to remake *Panique*, even if the original was great. The idea stuck in my mind and I remembered that the film had been adapted from a book by Simenon, so I bought the book (not the rights, just the book) and read it and then called Patrice Leconte and told him to read the book, since it's reasonably different from the film. He agreed to do it, but on the condition that there be enough divergent elements between his film and Duvivier's.

We started by looking for an actor for the lead who would be very physically different from Michel

Michel Blanc in Patrice Leconte's *Monsieur Hire*

Simon. Simon was big and bearded, so we chose not to hire Depardieu, but to look for a small, clean-shaven actor, and Michel Blanc came to mind. Leconte immediately saw the potential for what we could do, and everything else about the production fell easily into place. Michel Blanc and Sandrine Bonnaire agreed to do the film very quickly, the production itself wasn't very expensive, and so it wasn't very difficult to put together.

How do you see the role of the producer changing in the 1990s?

CARCASSONNE: I can't really define it, since there are as many definitions of a producer as there are producers in the profession. I would say that the head of Columbia-Tristar is as much of a producer as Gérard Vaugeois. They both do the same job but represent two different sides of the coin of being a producer. There is such an infinite number of combinations that defining my role in the future would be impossible.

Gérard Vaugeois, you have become a representative figure of the radical line in French experimental cinema. How would you define the difference between working on experimental as compared to commercial film?

VAUGEOIS: In fact, all film is commercial. All films are art, and often even experimental. What defines a project is its form, its narrative goal, and not its topic. There are three great French films about mining: *Le point du jour,* by Louis Daquin in 1949, *Le brasier,* by Eric Barbier in 1990, and *Germinal,* by Claude Berri in 1993. Using the same subject matter, the films all reach different conclusions through the structure of the scripts. Daquin tried to make modern film during a classicist period that today seems classic itself. When everything becomes academic, the modern films become classic. Daquin had added political references, which was brave at the time. In 1990, Barbier made a picturesque and romantic work that could be considered a very beautiful film. Then Berri made this narratively emasculated film.

What is killing cinema is that we believe we know what the public wants. In a way, when you want to rationalize it so that you don't take any more risks and make everybody happy, you're headed toward the lowest level of quality.

How would you apply this to current French filmmakers?

VAUGEOIS: Jean-Luc Godard is completely exceptional this way. Not one of his films is stereotypical. You never know what's going to happen, and their form continually bursts forth. It's not only in the power of what is said and printed on film. You can be moved to tears by the takes of the sky and Beethoven's music in *Passion* [1982]. I find it remarkable the way Godard succeeded in summarizing Alain Delon's career in the dialogue in *Nouvelle Vague* [1990]. A character asks Delon, "What are you doing here?" and Delon replies, "I'm arousing pity." It's a great means of synthesis and reference. Godard doesn't need to recite the list of Delon's films, everyone knows who

The set of Godard's *Passion*

Delon is on screen. Godard understood what we understand, he didn't speculate on our idiocy, but speculated more on our intelligence.

Could you give us your opinions on some other film-makers besides Godard?

VAUGEOIS: I like Bertrand Tavernier. From time to time, he succeeds, sometimes he doesn't, but he films this kind of hysteria that camouflages the true desire for cinema. Claude Sautet is more illusionary. He's never been good, and he's fooling himself thinking that what he does is good. I find Luc Besson [*Le dernier combat, Subway, Le grand bleu, Nikita, Leon*] intolerable—his films are just social sponges made by a young man who understood that the collective unconscious was the carrier of desire and that he had to be part of it. Jean-Jacques Beineix [*Diva, Betty Blue, Roselyne et les lions, IP5—L'île aux pachydermes*] is a fence sitter. He would like to be something other than what he is, and he's ambitious. His work isn't that bad, but he has the double ambition of wanting to be a real film-maker and also a commercial film-maker. He doesn't want to choose, and he has chosen not to get commercially burned in order to make the films he wants to make no matter what, as Philippe Garrel has. Garrel has assumed the responsibility for his financial status and furthermore, the consequences of this. He has always been paid little or not at all, and he's accepted this where the others want money.

So how do you go about producing the work of Philippe Garrel?

VAUGEOIS: We could take *Les baisers de secours* [*Urgent Kisses*] as an example, which is a totally auteur film Garrel made in 1989. $90,000 came from *avances sur recettes* [money advanced by the National Center of Cinematography that must be repaid after the film starts to make a profit], $180,000 came

Jean-Hugues Anglade and Beatrice Dalle in Jean-Jacques Beineix's *Betty Blue*

from La Sept/Arte, $70,000 from Canal+, $18,000 from pre-sales, and $270,000 from personal investment, for a total of about $630,000. Sales went to Canal+ for programming and to RAI [Italian network]. For his most commercial film, *J'entends plus la guitare* [*I Don't Hear the Guitar Anymore*] in 1991, which was still completely an auteur work, it was very simple. For a $1,000,000 budget, we had $330,000 from *avances sur recettes*, and the rest from personal risk. Nobody bought the film except Canal+ after it won the Silver Lion at the Venice festival.

How would you characterize the commercial life of a Garrel film?

VAUGEOIS: All his films were in deficit. *Les baisers de secours* in 1989 sold 16,000 or 17,000 tickets in Paris, and about 35,000 overall in France. There were about ten copies in distribution. *J'entends plus la guitare* in 1991 sold about 30,000 tickets in Paris and 60,000 tickets in France with 20 copies in distribution.

Do you think that they could be profitable over the long term?

VAUGEOIS: It's not important. When you work marginally, you have to go all the way with it, you have to maintain some kind of coherence in the extreme. It's very difficult to keep going financially. When you open the door to the office, you know that the day's battle will be survival and trying to continue to exist. We have to spend as much time looking for money and negotiating with the banks as we do in production. The whole structure stays together because I use the industrial receipts to keep to a marginal position. I don't feel dominated by the industry, because this is my choice, and I'm not condemned for it by any evil forces. Whether I'm a martyr or not, it's a question of choice. I am producer, distributor, and theater owner, and I try to find the synergy between the three. When I produce a film, I also distribute it, since I know how to do it. I don't have to find a distributor and pay additional fees for copies. I've been an independent distributor since 1980. But even directors are involved in the business aspect of things. That's the visible part, but behind there is still the desire to make films. You can't repress human nature.

Would you say that French cinema has specific genres or styles that can be grouped together?

CARCASSONNE: Yes, but I would add that the genres have now been broken up to a certain extent. The establishment of genres mainly came about in the 1960s, created by the schism between the New Wave cinema and the more classic French cinema, also called academic, including more middle-ground film-makers like Robert Bresson. This bipolar system was refined in the 1970s as the film-makers of the New Wave joined the dominant style of film-making. This is evident in the last films of Truffaut, or the films of Claude Chabrol, which don't really have much to do with the New Wave style.

The poles shifted and regrouped, and a kind of new New Wave emerged in the 1970s, with films financed by the INA [earlier form of the Centre National de la Cinématographie] or through the system of *avances sur recettes*, and directed by Marguerite Duras, Raul Ruiz, Benoît Jacquot, André Téchiné, and so on, up until a certain time. There are now film-makers who are able to make the transition from one kind of movie theater to the next, except for people like Philippe Garrel or Luc Moulet, who haven't changed their style or status in the cinema one iota for the past 20 years (where André Téchiné was able to). Then at the end of the 1970s, a new kind of *cinéma d'auteur* emerged whose ambitions were more popular and commercial, which was completely different from before. It started with people like Beineix, Besson, and others. These are film-makers that were born into a culture based on image and modernity, music videos, synthetic images, all of which played a much larger part than they had for the previous generation.

What do you think of the new young film-makers like Beineix, Besson, and Carax?

NUYTTEN: I understood Beineix's first film as having one central idea. The problem was maintaining a film for an hour and a half on the basis of the visual concept. *Diva* was innovative but very referenced in

Frédéric Andrei and Thuy An Luu in Beineix's *Diva*

terms of an image style. But our generation is at the crossing of traditional French culture and American imagery. The true American visual generation was born with Lazlo Kovacs [*Five Easy Pieces*] or Vilmos Zsigmond [*Close Encounters of the Third Kind, The Deer Hunter, McCabe and Mrs. Miller*], and is a mix of naturalism and richness in lighting. This current brutal passage to aesthetic imagery has its references in American literary imagery, which began with the Beat Generation and Jack Kerouac. There are cultural references for my generation in an extremely concrete American vision, and there is a resurgence of this American imagery for our generation which is meeting the music video generation. You can see these two directions in *Diva*.

The more "academic" film-makers in the 1950s—would you say more well-known auteurs like Besson and Beineix fit into a similar category?

MENEGOZ: Yes. This kind of formalism is very important to them. They are incapable of saying, "If I can't make my film in 70mm CinemaScope, I can make it in 16mm, the form is related only to the story."

Could this modern formalism be considered a new cinema language or a new cinema grammar?

MENEGOZ: I don't think so. Their use of formalism is a way of establishing the story. But the act of making the story is not the story itself. *La lune dans le caniveau* [*The Moon in the Gutter*] by Jean-Jacques Beineix is an example of extreme formalism, but the formalism functions completely for the story. It is implicated in and is part of the story.

One could say that The Moon in the Gutter *is an example of a* film d'auteur *of the 1980s, which was not an opinion that many critics shared. Do you think that the negative criticism the film received was justified?*

MENEGOZ: I think that compared to earlier auteur films, and I may be being cynical here, there was a small group of people who had a cinema review and this was *Cahiers du cinéma*. They had established a mode of operations based on their friends, their contacts, and so on. If Beineix had had a few contacts and associates and if they together in turn had had a publication of their own, he would not have had as much trouble. A review is a very strong weapon. Beineix was on bad terms with the critics, and the result was a succession of misunderstandings, one aggression after another which in the end become insurmountable. He should have his own media weapon.

Do you see any younger film-makers who could be considered auteurs?

VAUGEOIS: Olivier Assayas, who owes a lot to Garrel. He films his characters very differently in realistic situations. Claire Denis isn't bad either. Then there are the film-makers who are coming out of the 1990s, like Arnaud Despléchin, Cédric Kahn, and Xavier Beauvois. The case of Léos Carax is strange. I was irritated by *Boy Meets Girl* [1984] since I found his use of quotations too easy. His work didn't really convince me, and he was much too cunning for me. There was too much talk about Carax, about how he was the spiritual son of Godard, and I don't see anything of Godard in Carax's work, neither artistically nor socially. A lot of people know how to make films but they don't have any talent. And what sets Besson, Beineix, and Carax going is emotion and not ideas, although Carax and Beineix are more formalist. What will keep the formalists like Sautet, Tavernier, and Costa-Gavras glued to the spot is that they continue to just film ideas.

How would you analyze the influences behind the new generation of formalists?

VAUGEOIS: For Carax, he uses Cocteau and Godard as models, and also Garrel.

Carax wrote an open letter of support for Philippe Garrel, and his influences could be characterized as intellectual, and yet you would class him along with Besson and Beineix?

VAUGEOIS: I like the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, but does that mean that when I write, it's the return of Apollinaire? I can't criticize Carax for liking Garrel nor Garrel for liking Carax, but Garrel's films have overwhelmed from the beginning, like Godard's films overwhelm me, but not Carax's films.

Bruno Nuytten, was there a clean break between your last film, Jean de Florette *[1986], as director of photography, and your first film,* Camille Claudel *[1988], as director? Did you make a deliberate decision to abandon cinematography for directing, or did events lead you in this direction?*

NUYTTEN: In retrospect, we could talk about it as a career move, but I'm not always aware of these things. So no, there was absolutely no kind of status report telling me to "go on to something else." I had gone through my greatest period of doubt during the first part of the 1980s. I took a break at the beginning of the 1980s: 1979 to 1980, I left for the U.S. to shoot

Isabelle Adjani in Bruno Nuytten's *Camille Claudel*

Brubaker with Robert Redford. My American experience was viewed in France as a kind of career-oriented union betrayal. This was, of course, not the case; the film was for me just an experience among many others. But the rumor probably worked for some and gave others something to think about. When I came back to France, I found myself unemployed since all the filmmakers brushed me off.

So how did you make the transition?

NUYTTEN: Everything was based on a request by Isabelle Adjani. She very much wanted to act in a film about Camille Claudel but hadn't found a director who would accept the project. There were many reasons for this: The story was too dark, it was a period film and a biographical film that required research, and a film based on the idea of making an art film about art. So that you can understand her request, I'd also have to clarify the context. Isabelle Adjani and I were together for almost ten years, and we had separated only one year before she asked me. I saw her immediately . . . and you have to talk about feelings; it was an occasion to see her again, with maybe the ambiguous goal of having her in my life again after the film. Another essential objective was to see her again on screen.

And in order to understand this point, one has to mention the terrible rumor circulating at that time about Adjani's state of health. . . .

NUYTTEN: It was the beginning of media coverage of AIDS in France, around 1985. Mass consciousness was looking for a communications vector in which to identify the horrible fear of this mortal disease. One character became the "witch," in the hunt, and a rumor began circulating at the Cannes Film Festival. We had

a friend who was dying of the disease and Isabelle went to visit him several times at the American Hospital. Six months later, the press was saying every day that Adjani was on the brink of death, that she had been secretly hospitalized. Some doctors even stated anonymously to the media that they were taking care of Isabelle. This had an effect on her professionally, since none of the insurance companies wanted to insure her any longer, although she was in perfect health. Why her? Maybe not only because her father was Algerian and therefore she was "foreign," but also because she was beautiful, talented, wealthy, powerful, and therefore the perfect "witch" to hunt.

So there was an impressive media campaign linked to Adjani's reappearance on screen, which meant that all the attention was focused on her.

I suffered from the lack of media interrogation, which means that one no longer asks oneself any questions, and I would say that each work deserves questioning. So Isabelle had to handle it alone. But I was very surprised that the foreign press took me into consideration. Japan is a very interesting example; the Japanese press was extremely professional and very well informed, and asked questions that showed a very rare quality of precision. The theme of this family that has a daughter committed in order to protect the family name could perhaps be found in certain periods of Japan's history. In England and Italy, I found the press much nastier. The Australians reacted well, while the Scandinavian countries remained totally silent about the film. Which leaves the adventure of the film's U.S. release.

The opening in New York was very sophisticated, and I was greeted politely, but I felt a kind of resistance behind it. I was yet another French director with a subtitled film that wouldn't end, although I had cut 30 minutes from the U.S. version. In addition, Paul Claudel, who is one of the best-known French authors of the century, is unknown in the U.S. The Americans were expecting much more about the relationship between Camille and Auguste Rodin.

The first screening in Los Angeles was reserved for Hollywood professionals. Some identified with the Camille Claudel, who fought for the right to her artistic vision much like they fight within the Hollywood system. I remember something Steven Spielberg said, which was that he was very moved by the film, being a cursed artist himself—cursed at that time after the failure of *The Empire of the Sun*. When he made a speech during a luncheon for all the [foreign] directors who had been nominated for the Academy Awards, he said in a somewhat naive way, "Stay home, you are free and you don't know the price of freedom."

How would you characterize international production, for example, the relation between production in France and in the United States?

CARCASSONNE: If I were to meet Tim Burton in an airport, and we hit it off, it would not mean I'd produce one of his films through Cinéa—you have to be realistic. I would call my friends at Polygram in London and in Los Angeles, and I would say, I've made contact with Tim Burton, what do we do now? I think it's more a problem of internal politics.

The second half of my response is that I would say that European production is more based in myth and imagination. The successive failures of European producers who have tried to infiltrate the American market must mean something. The only ones who have made it—through debatable means—are those who have been completely Americanized. As for the Americans, except when they pose administrative and legal problems, I don't think we do the same job. They make films that work very well for them, which are sometimes annoying and sometimes good. I know it's a closed market, and making a million at the box office is great but.... In the case of a miracle, we could make eight million instead of two, but it won't change my strategy of production. If a film we produce works well in the U.S., that's fine, but I would be happy making money with it anywhere. Furthermore, if my secretary told me that there were producers from the U.S., Germany, Japan, or Moldavia who were here to see me all at the same time, I wouldn't hesitate about deciding who to see, and it would never be the Americans. They are never my priority, any way about it.

How do you perceive the strength of French cinema abroad?

VAUGEOIS: For the kind of cinema I produce, it's almost none. I have never been able to sell anything to an American distributor. I've made some international sales in Belgium and Switzerland, a few in Portugal, some to Greek television, a few in Italy. In certain European countries, French film only has 35 percent of the French market, as opposed to 65 percent 20 years ago, and couldn't work in any other market after having lost so much of its own.

American cinema has taken over because we've allowed it to. If we want to healthily manage the economic situation, we have to look at it as a problem of competition, and organize our market in order to find the balance. We didn't want to do this, and so we let

the Americans do it. We were looking at the problem from the wrong angle, since now the French theater owners want American films in their theaters. But if you consider the intellectual level of the theater owners, their desires are impoverished. There is some prestige for a minority of film-makers. Auteur cinema has prestige, along the lines of luxury like perfume and champagne. You know it's luxury even if you've never tasted it.

How would you rate French cinema abroad in terms of its economic rank, influence, or prestige?

MENEGOZ: I think it's at a tenth of what it could be. We had a very interesting conversation with Lina Wertmuller several years ago, when Italian cinema was very strong. She said that Italian cinema was much stronger and richer than French cinema, but that the Italians didn't sell themselves or know how to, and it is the same for the French. In order to increase our ability to export ourselves, to sell ourselves, we need to work much harder at it. We've already lost a good part of the market outside of France. We've been slipping, all the while closing our eyes to the advance of American cinema. In terms of films for a large public, I think that there are enough French films of sufficient diversity and quality, although there is always room for improvement. But what we need to work on and to perfect is our means of distribution.

Do you think French cinema has a particular kind of intellectual prestige?

MENEGOZ: In many countries, French cinema has unfortunately become synonymous with intellectual and boring, strictly for students or a small intellectual elite.

With this as a background, what do you see for the future of French cinema in the current decade, economically and artistically?

MENEGOZ: I think we're well into the decade and we have not seen anything approaching a new trend, at least not artistically. We may need 20 more years before we see any trend develop. The New Wave went on for 30 years before anything new appeared.

■ Sheila Steeples is a writer and script consultant living in Paris. Allen Katona is an independent documentary film-maker and journalist of French origin.

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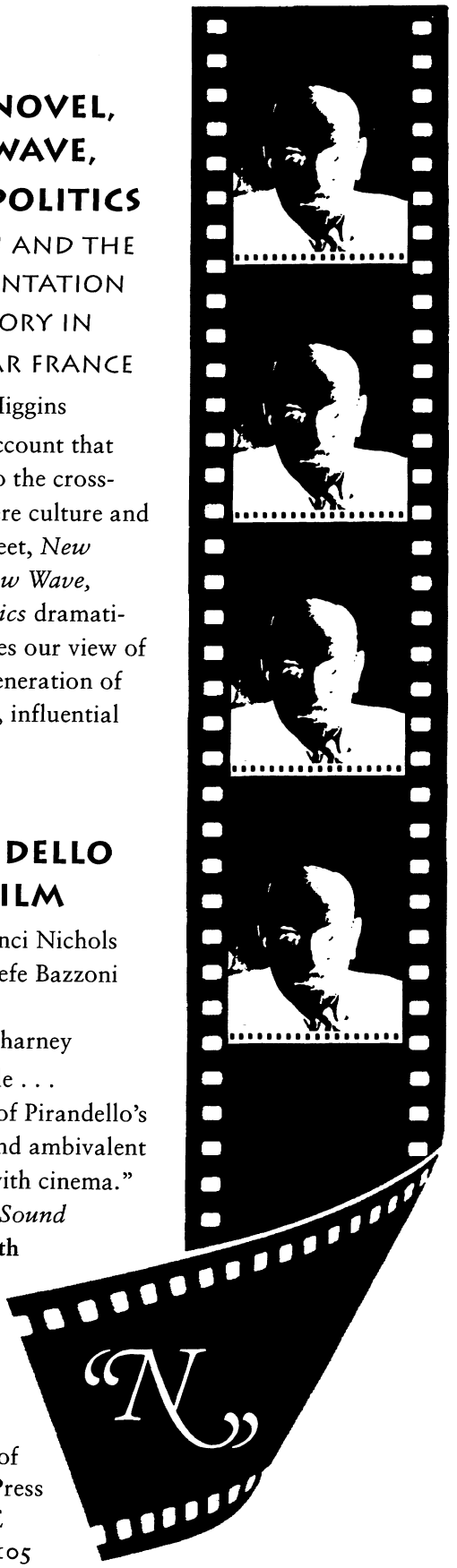

University of Nebraska Press
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800-755-1105

Mark Rappaport's Notes on *Rock Hudson's Home Movies*

Rock Hudson's Home Movies *is a collage film, in which the "found footage" is the star. It is revisionist film history that reexamines Hudson's films in light of what we now all know about him—namely, that he was gay and died of AIDS. Rock is a unique paradox—the paradigm of screen masculinity who also happens to be gay. The fictional construct that was Rock Hudson becomes the text that can be read and reread in a variety of ways—but all roads lead to Rome. Rock Hudson was a prisoner, as well as a purveyor, of sexual politics and stereotypes. He is a prism through which sexual assumptions, gender-coding, and sexual role-playing in Hollywood movies and, therefore, by extension, America of the 1950s and 1960s can be explored. In a sense, it is Hudson's sexuality that is the real auteur of his movies—just as his closeted-ness was the icon all American was worshipping.*

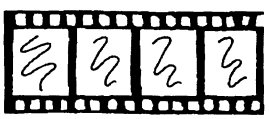
When I was asked by a film festival director for a statement of the "director's intentions" (directors are usually the last people you should believe when it comes to talking about what their films really mean), that's what I wrote. I've been using it as publicity material ever since. So now it's part of the official story. But nothing quite that grand was on my mind when I started working on what turned out to be *Rock Hudson's Home Movies.*

Background. In the early 1960s, when movie houses were still movie houses—not multiplexes, not parts of shopping malls, not afterthoughts, not subterranean holes in the ground where the subway hurtles by ten feet away—there were about a dozen movie palaces, formerly legitimate theaters, on 42nd Street that played old double features to a fairly unselective clientele, charged minimal admission prices, and were open round the clock. This was a place you could catch up on B-movies from a few years back and certainly all the Westerns you ever avoided. At one of these theaters (they had names like "Liberty" and "Victory" and "Apollo," names which belied their skid-row status and suggested days of former glory), I saw Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly*. In the film, a greedy young psychopath of the female variety, who always wanted to know what was in the box (that mysterious thing that everyone in the film is after), is finally alone with the box and is ready to open it. She unties one of the straps. . . . From the recesses of the darkened balcony someone yells out, "Don't open the box!!!" She opens the box, which contains something like an atom bomb. This modern-day Pandora goes up in flames. It's hard

to convey the chastising but self-satisfied tone in which the voice in the theater calls out in response, "I told you not to open it!"

This is before the days when audiences would scream out "Kill the bitch!!," and well before the days when black audiences would scream "Kill the white bitch!!" It was a more innocent time.

I personally like the idea of moviegoing as a contact sport. When I'm not totally engrossed in watching a film, I find myself talking back to the screen. Well, maybe it's just in a whisper, maybe it's just in my head, but there are two sound tracks going on all the time: the one from the film and my running commentary on it. Which makes watching films on TV much more democratic. In the privacy of my living room I can speak my mind aloud and at the same decibel level as the film I'm watching. The invention of the VCR turned this active approach to film criticism into an indoor sport. You can gripe about the dialogue, the sets, the angles, the acting, the plotting, at your own pace. If you wanted to (I never did) you could roll back and rewrite your barbs until you got it right, until you found the perfect retort, *le mot juste*. In a sense, it's almost the antithesis of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* phenomenon, where the script is Holy Writ. You can be your own Greek chorus commenting on some other film-maker's tragedy. You, combative viewer, can be the antistrophe.

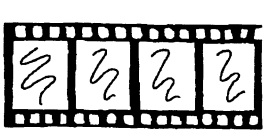


1982. ***Dead men don't wear plaid.*** When I first saw this movie, I wished that I had made it. As far as incorporating elements from the films one loves and consciously making them part of one's work and aesthetic, no film has gone further. What I found most extraordinary about it, aside from the trickery of the actual making of it—trying to match the decor and texture of existing movies with the one that is being made—was that the movie must have been written with one hand on the typewriter and the other on the VCR, with piles of videocassettes stacked nearby. Clearly, the writers were looking at dozens of movies as they were writing, to see which shots and which lines of dialogue could be lifted, appropriated, and woven into the script they were fashioning. This kind of patchwork process appealed to me greatly. Partly because of my background as a film editor and partly because of my aesthetic as a pasticheur (steal from everyone, but wipe the fingerprints off!), I found the film an extraordinary step in the direction of, well, something or other—a valentine to the genres you love coupled with a sobering awareness that to try to duplicate them would be ludicrously anachronistic.

I liked the idea that an existing text could be pulled apart, detached from its intended context, and rewoven into a new text with its meanings changed or shifted, leaving its actual essence untampered with. I liked also the idea that the film-makers were thinking as they were making their work (they *want* the seams to show), and you can see their thought processes nakedly on the screen. This was back in 1982, a decade before every hack journalist would casually use words like "postmodernist" and "deconstruction" to describe everything from beer commercials to Almodóvar to "The Flintstones." Admittedly these words have now, through mind-numbing overuse, lost their meaning, but imagine the shock, in 1982, of seeing a movie like *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* made in Hollywood, a realm in which such polysyllabic words have to get special entry visas. So what *was* the film, then, if the makers didn't have the vocabulary to describe the process? Perhaps they were just plugging into the Zeitgeist. After all, postmodernism describes a process. It is not a formula for making work. Deconstruction is done after the fact by the spectator, not beforehand by the publicist.

Well, Zeitgeist or no, it's certain that the writers could not have come up with such a concept without the availability of VCRs or VHSs of the movies they drew on. Ten years earlier, such a movie would have been unthinkable. Ten years later, is there anyone who is not doing it?

In 1984, I show parts of the film to a class I'm teaching. One of the students, a recalcitrant troublemaker from the beginning of the semester, raises his hand and says, "So what? It's stupid."



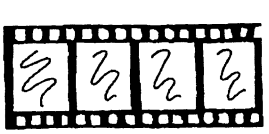
Six years ago. I am staying at a friend's house in La Jolla, California. In addition to the lovely weather and the beach-front house, he has cable TV, which I don't. While channel-surfing (this would *have* to be the right word because just outside the house is the prime surfing spot in San Diego), I see a low-budget 1950s film about runaway teenage bad girls on a reform-school-type work farm. At the bottom of the screen are the silhouettes of what are clearly movie-theater seats. Facing the screen, watching the image

just as we the spectators are, is a young man, flanked by what looks like a talking gum-ball machine and some low-rent space-age robot that looks like it's built out of spare kitchen-appliance parts. (Sometimes there is also a talking vacuum cleaner who participates in the chatter.) The three of them are heckling the actors and rewriting the dialogue as well as blasting holes in the implausibilities of what we see on the screen. "Oh, boy!" I think. "This is for me." But, after all the initial delight that such a thing exists at all, the charm wears off. A little bit of this stuff goes a long way. There are lots of predictable cheap shots and the humor is the kind of stuff you came up with when you were in high school. Or when you were on drugs and thought that everything you said was hilarious. The show, "Mystery Science Theater 3000," is still on the air and it's more popular than ever.

The point? Everyone's a critic. Also, no piece of film is so worthless that it can't be recycled and commented upon.

The following year I decide to get basic cable myself. One night, after midnight, as I'm idly dialing from one channel to another (in New York, we have a couple of public access channels that program fairly explicit sexual material for restless and/or horny late-night viewers), there is a show that catches my attention. Clips from movies, Hollywood and otherwise (mostly pornos, actually), arranged haphazardly with no apparent narrative direction to them—all the clips are of young men in various states of undress and it soon becomes clear that the guiding sensibility is a predilection for male teenagers in white Fruit of the Loom briefs, a formula that does not interest me nearly as much as it does the man who slaps the show together every week. We never see him but we hear his voice commenting endlessly with a distanced but not disinterested irony about what we're watching.

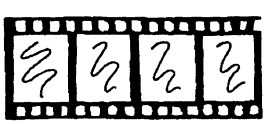
At first, again, I think this is great, and for several weeks running make sure to watch the show. It is called CCTV—Closet Case TV—and the unseen host is Rick X, apparently an English teacher at a local university who, to protect his job, has adopted this *nom de télévision*. To throw the censors off his trail, he calls it Christian Community TV, but I don't think anyone is fooled.



Along the same lines. With the proliferation of television talk shows on which—in front of an audience of unseen millions—disgruntled family members can argue about who did what to whom, where women can fight with their boyfriends who cheat on them with their girlfriends, where transsexuals can express how womanly they feel and give the studio audience tips on how to please a man . . . it was bound to happen. One of the fledgling cable channels produced their most successful show yet, "Talk Soup." The format is simplicity itself: the smart-aleck host presents clips from and comments on the best exchanges on that particular day's TV talk show. In other words, you don't have to sit through the whole opera—you can just have the highlights.

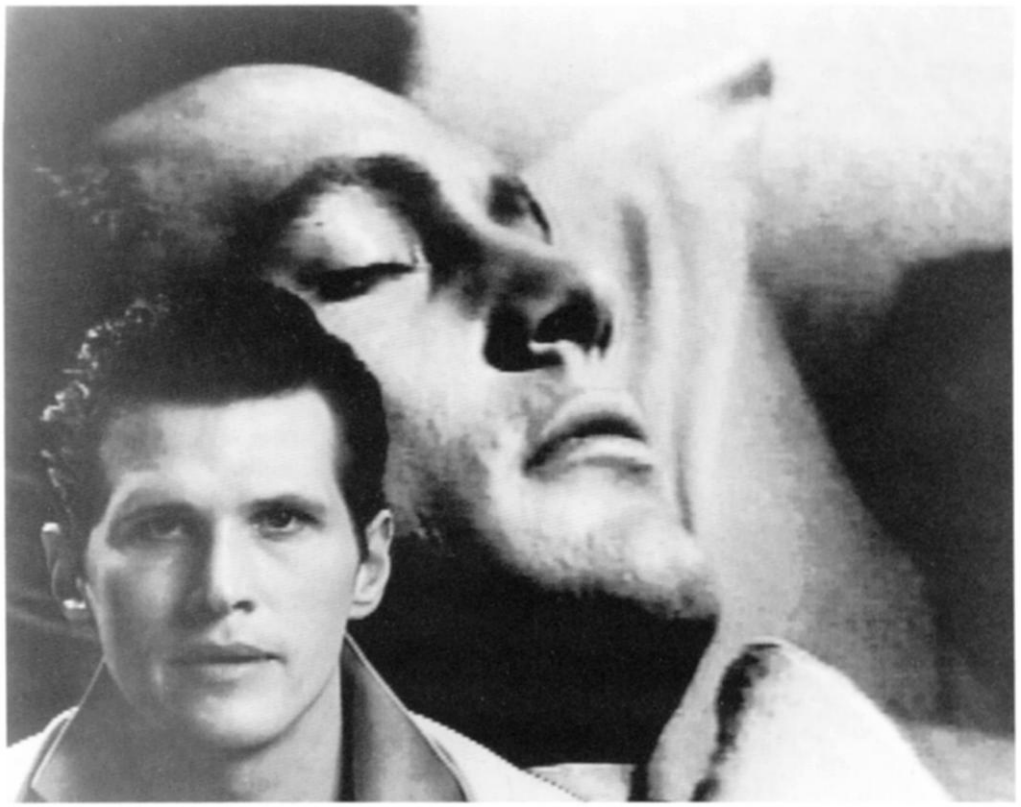
The show is so successful that it spawns more unholy progeny. There's also "Pure Soap," on which plot synopses and clips from that day's soap operas are given and commented upon.

It seems that *every*one is doing it, commenting on popular culture while creating it at the same time—the snake eating its tail. Everyone is into deconstructing the all too obviously deconstructible. Recently there was a made-for-TV movie called *Deconstructing Sarah*. I have no idea what it was about, but the fact that the word itself can work its way into the TV listing, with the expectation that viewers will know what it means, should give practitioners of critical theory pause as to how easily complex ideas can be popularized and debased.



If you believe that mechanical inventions have no political relation to the times in which they're invented, skip the next section.

Without getting into the details, several years ago I was quite ill. For a period of two and a half years, I was virtually bed-bound. I would feel OK for a while, but never really well, and then would relapse and have to spend two or three days in bed. I had been, prior to that time, taping movies on my VCR and had a library of some favorite films as well as many items I had never looked at. It was the only thing I could do during the day—watch films. I couldn't work, I couldn't read, I couldn't write. Sometimes I was too sick even to watch TV. Yes, *that* sick. Often I would tape whatever junk was on at night and watch part of it the next day. Or sometimes, on a good day—that is, if I felt well enough to walk—I'd go to the nearest video



Eric Farr in *Rock Hudson's Home Movies*

store, just a few blocks away, come back, and collapse with a pile of videos to fill up my days while waiting to get better. At one point it occurred to me how convenient and coincidental it was that the invention and widespread dispersal of VCRs and VHSs coincided with the worldwide spread of AIDS and other immune system disorders.

However, the paranoia of having an illness that didn't have any identifiable source or even—at the beginning—a name made me realize that VCRs had to be invented to becalm an already subdued, ever-growing army of weak and debilitated people. But for what purpose? To prevent them from committing mass suicide? From feebly voicing their discontent with the way medicine is practiced and diseases treated? A disabled segment of society soothed into further passivity by watching Walt Disney movies, *Die Hard*, and *Terminator 2* until the magnetic stock wears off the surface of the vinyl tape. VCRs were designed, if not by intent, certainly by default, to take the burdens off family members and loved ones and distract one from the seeming hopelessness of one's own ailment.

A little bread, lots of circuses—rent two videos and you'll feel better in the morning. Perhaps *Home Alone* is the prophetic movie title of what may one day be called the concurrent age of AIDS and VCRs, a bed-bound population being comforted to the hum of best-selling rental video hits. And even if you can no longer participate in your own life, you should still be able to keep up with disposable popular culture. It seems clear that religion is not the only opiate of the masses. But although Benjamin might have predicted the uses and applications of the VCR, Marx certainly couldn't have. I remember, at the time, being incredibly grateful for the invention of this electronic babysitter.

At one point, I was watching Victor Fleming's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1941), a film I'd never seen before and which impressed me with its nonchalant and uncensored kinkiness, especially since it was made by MGM. In one Hyde fantasy scene, Spencer Tracy has good girl Lana Turner and bad girl Ingrid Bergman strapped to his coach as horses while he is gleefully whipping them. But that's another story.

There's a scene in which Lana drags Spencer off to a museum and points to a pint-sized replica of a famous sculpture. Lana explains that the original is in the Louvre and is called *Winged Victory*. Spence, without missing a beat, quips, "What's the point of being victorious if you haven't got a head?" Lana snaps back, "What's the sense of my acquiring culture if you're not going to pay attention to me?"

Well, that pretty much lays it on the line, doesn't it? I also distinctly remember her saying, "I like know-

ing about art. It gives you something to talk about." But I could never find that line again, even though I went through the movie two times. In any case, on that day the idea for *Rock Hudson's Home Movies* was born.

I thought it would be interesting to put together a compilation, with some kind of minimal commentary, of scenes about art and artists as they are represented in Hollywood movies, exploring the contradictory and conflicting attitudes in which artists and art seem to be revered but yet reviled—almost within the same breath/frame. I got excited about the idea and jotted down about two dozen titles which quickly came to mind, from which I could extract scenes.

I also excitedly scribbled down half a dozen other ideas, examining modes of representation in mainstream film, one of which turned out to be *Rock Hudson*. It seemed more urgent to do *Rock Hudson* because it meant dealing with gender issues, role-playing, homosexuality, and AIDS. Also, the idea of an invented, "fictitious" autobiography interested me. It provided a structure on which to hang a variety of different themes and still maintain cohesion.

At that point in my life, various projects had fallen through, or were in the process of falling through. I had also been quite sick, again, after a relatively long period of fair health, for about two months. I thought that there was a strong possibility that I might never be physically capable of working again the way I had in earlier years, that I might never have the strength to do another feature. I thought that this kind of compilation was something that could be done as a mildly low-level work involvement. I could more or less transfer scenes from one VCR to another VCR and then edit them. Simple.

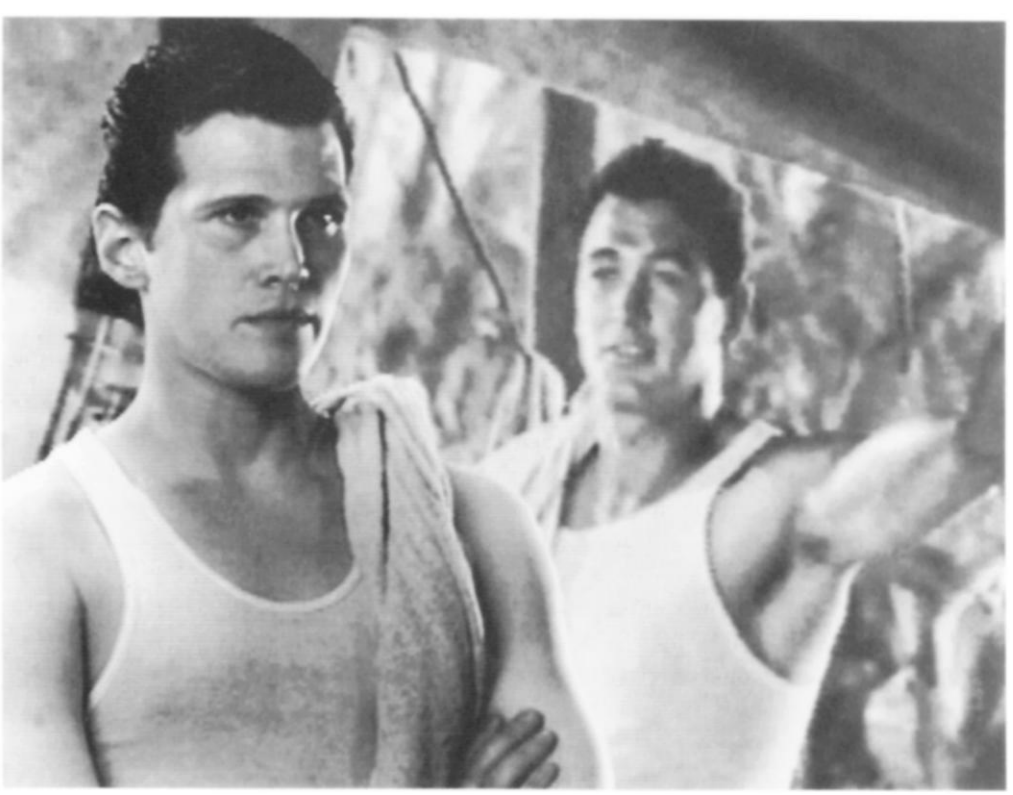
It wasn't.

One of the proposed projects was a video about illness as depicted in films. Women are always depicted as hypochondriacs and complainers, even when they have serious ailments. Men suffer, mostly silently, but better yet, they don't get sick at all. They carry on and then drop dead. If they have mental illnesses (and they rarely do in films), it's mostly amnesia.

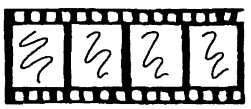
I submitted a hastily drafted proposal of the project, provisionally titled *FBI Warning/Couch Potato Videos* (Couch Potato Productions subsequently became the name of my company), to Bill Horrigan, the director of Media Arts at The Wexner Center of the Arts in Columbus, Ohio. Even though the museum is tiny by almost any museum standard, the Media Arts department was in the process of amassing tons of video equipment, partly because it's also affiliated with Ohio State University. Bill said, Sure, come out and use whatever we've got. I went out there and started using the equipment even before most of it was there or hooked up, and way before the video studios designed to house the equipment had been built.

I should add, just as a footnote to the above, now

Eric Farr "with" Rock Hudson



that I am completely better, that I don't see my future as limited to such small-scale projects as *Rock Hudson*. When I say "small-scale," I do not say it to deprecate the work. I am only referring to the fact that what it entails is just me sitting in front of an editing machine, with very few other people involved in the actual making of the project, and relatively little money to spend on the whole work.



PERHAPS THIS IS A LONG-WINDED introduction as to how and why I came to make *Rock Hudson's Home Movies*. But it seems to me that the genesis of an idea is not always a straight line. When I first started doing the video/film (in several countries, it's been released as a film—other places have shown it in its original video format), I don't think I had a specific notion of what I wanted to do. I had written some notes—about 30 pages of loose ramblings, not unsimilar in tone or style to what you're reading now. But when it came time to do the actual editing, I realized that everything I had written was way too long and could never fit in in between or with the clips I wanted to use. I realized, though, that I could, with a microphone, speak onto the second audio channel while keeping the sound from the actual film clips on the first channel. What a discovery! To be able to write without paper, pen, or typewriter! What fun! The spur-of-the-moment remark would lead into another cut, which would suggest another way of structuring the next cluster of shots. . . . It was an incredibly liberating realization and experience, writing without letters or a keyboard, writing in a style of seeming spontaneity.

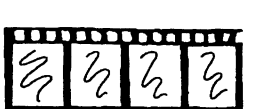
Nor did I want the piece to have an academic flavor. I'm not much of a reader of critical theory (the only times I immersed myself in it was when I was teaching, because I felt a nagging need to sound smarter than my students), and I certainly didn't want to use the jargon—replete with a vocabulary no one ever seems to use in real life but to which people seem to become addicted as soon as they start writing. Nor did I want the film to be only for that (tiny) audience that was secretly initiated into fashion-driven argot, either. I wanted it to be accessible to a wider audience and, above all, entertaining.

But, in reality, *Rock Hudson's Home Movies* is a child of 15 or 20 years of critical theory. It may not be indebted to specific articles or theories, but it certainly is indebted to theoretical approaches that have subsequently reached deep into our culture—questions of gender stereotyping, feminist and gay concerns about modes of representation, what an image means, and the different ways in which an image or words, or an image *combined* with words, can be read. Nor could *Rock Hudson* have been made before the invention of that quintessential surplus-capital leisure-time appliance, the VCR.

In that sense, I am very pleased with having made it. I always thought of myself as very linear and locked into traditional forms. It pleased me to be able to use newer technologies and reinvent the purposes for which they were originally designed—in the course of which I realized that video is a much more gracious and relaxed format than film for something as personal and cranky as an essay. Creating an "essay" on film, at least these days, seems like a great deal of work (and money) for something that has such a relatively small audience.

But most of all, when I say that *Rock Hudson* could not have been made even ten years earlier, I mean in the sense that earlier a vocabulary wasn't in place to articulate the concerns the piece deals with. Before the days of women's liberation, I remember going to films with my then wife and talking about how women were treated (we most certainly did *not* use the word "represented") in Hollywood films of the time as opposed to the films of, say, Ophuls or Mizoguchi. But if you saw something on the screen that made your skin crawl, even 25 years ago, there was no way to question it in a way that was clear and understandable. Perhaps it bothered you in some kind of nebulous way, perhaps it left a knot in your stomach. Perhaps you saw a derogatory or degrading image on the screen and accepted it or, worse yet, didn't respond to it or even notice it. Or you would just explain it away as, Well, that's the way the world is. There wasn't a vocabulary to even *object*. The words "sexism" and "male chauvinism" hadn't been born yet, although the postures they describe were fully in place.

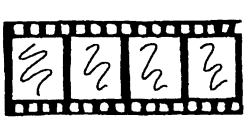
Perhaps heightened consciousness is what I'm talking about. Twenty years of feminism and gay activism has to count for something. Once an issue is raised, it can never be made invisible again, except perhaps for those with a very perverse interest in denial. *Rock Hudson* is certainly a product of that Zeitgeist.



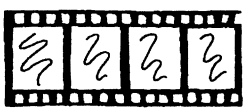
THE ONLY EFFECTIVE WAY to confront and critique popular culture is by presenting it in the forms and images in which it first presented itself, not by providing a second-hand description of it. As important for me in making *Rock Hudson* as the issue of representation—especially in the areas of gender role-playing, masculine/feminine, straight/gay, etc.—is the ability to *show the footage* under discussion. When someone writes an article about representation in film, you have to rely on your dim memories (that is, *if* you've seen it and *if* you remember it at all) and on their description of what *they* were seeing. If they are describing several examples, *they* are making the connections for the reader. In my format, you bring the source to the spectator. Even if the scene is out of context, the authenticity of what is presented, what is seen and heard, is undeniable. You are not subject to the additional, and unreliable, barrier of a secondary source's impression of whatever it was *they* think they saw.

Of course, this "showing" of film or video source images inevitably brings up one of the major issues in appropriation of footage—clearance of copyrights, a legal issue that I believe will become one of increasing importance in this decade. My excuse in a court of law would be that these images have corrupted us and it's our turn at bat. Images have been presented to us, shaping our perceptions of the way we learn about the world from the time we were very young to the present moment. And they'll continue until the day we die. To say that films reflect reality has always been a half-truth at best. If the relationship between screen and spectator is an endless hall of mirrors reflecting expectations, received ideas, false myths, and the desire to embrace them, in one way or another the cycle must be short-circuited. Rocks must be hurled into this gallery of endlessly reflecting mirrors—the screen, the audience, the audience, the screen. . . .

These, I suppose, were some of the impulses behind making *Rock Hudson's Home Movies*, as well as a desire to make some kind of statement, however ineffectual, about AIDS and AIDS-related deaths.



AT THE TIME I STARTED doing *Rock Hudson*, I had seen it as a five-finger exercise, something to do between the bigger projects while waiting for the money to materialize. I am currently doing with Jean Seberg what I did with Rock Hudson.* And some time in the future, I plan to take on Howard Hughes. As in *Rock Hudson*, I will be using the structure of a fictitious autobiography (that nevertheless has real underpinnings) to examine contemporary social attitudes and mores and to explore the peculiar ways that private lives are revealed in an unashamedly public medium. I sift through dozens of films looking for details that illuminate a larger picture, as if the ultimate Jean Seberg movie is yet to be made. The search for the revealing scene or shot is part of the process in revisionist film history in which all films are artifacts in a densely layered archeological dig.



ABOUT A YEAR AFTER *Rock Hudson's Home Movies* was made, in one of the performance spaces in New York, a young cartoonist was showing a 15-minute VHS called "Elmer Fudd's Home Movies." It was a compilation of scenes from Warner Bros. cartoons of Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd flirting with each other, Bugs kissing Elmer on the lips (at first, Elmer is disgusted, but he always finds he likes it), one or the other *en travestie*, hoping to fool the other one—in a word, it had lots of scenes of cross-dressing, gender-switching, and same-sex (for the moment let's ignore the interspecies implications) smooching which, although not exactly designed to confuse young children, still did not quite give them a clear idea of how the heterosexual world imagines it functions. In any case, I was quite pleased that the program notes described "Elmer Fudd's Home Movies" as "in the tradition of *Rock Hudson's Home Movies*."

To paraphrase the end of Melville's brilliant and underrated novel *The Confidence Man*, something more may yet come of this. . . .

■ Mark Rappaport has written and directed eight feature films since the early 70s, including *The Scenic Route* (1978) and *Imposters* (1980).

**From The Journals of Jean Seberg* is reviewed on page 35. Ed.

Rock Hudson's Home Movies is distributed in 16mm by Artistic License Films; video distribution is by Water Bearer Films, both in New York City.

This article is abridged from a longer version published in volume 12 of the French journal *Trafic* (Fall, 1994).

Jillian Sandell

Reinventing Masculinity

The Spectacle of Male Intimacy in the Films of John Woo

It is, by now, something of a cliché within film studies to assert that masculinity is "in crisis." As Lee Grieveson recently argued in *Screen,* it is becoming increasingly clear that in contrast to earlier, more totalizing theories of gender and social privilege, masculinity has never been fixed and stable but has always had an ambivalent relation to power and domination. While film theory, since Laura Mulvey's pioneering 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," has frequently argued that masculinity is unproblematically associated with activity, sadism, and the furthering of the narrative (and femininity correlatively with passivity, masochism, and the interruption of narrative via spectacle),[1] a more productive approach might be, as Grieveson suggests, to acknowledge that masculinity exists "in complex and contradictory ways with regard to various configurations of power."[2] Indeed, as Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark ask in their introduction to *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, "What are we to make of a masculinity that can preserve its hegemony only by confessing its anxieties at every turn?"[3] What is needed, therefore, is for analyses of masculinity in popular culture to be more specific—socially, historically, and politically—about how particular representations of masculinity present a challenge or a critique to questions of gender, male privilege, and social power.

With this in mind, the films of John Woo provide an interesting counterpoint to contemporary discussions about masculinity. One of Hong Kong's most famous and respected film directors, Woo has been a cult favorite in the U.S. since the late 1980s; fans and critics alike have celebrated and enjoyed what Rick Baker calls Woo's "heroic bloodshed" movies.[4] In particular, Woo is famous for his vision of intense male friendships—depicted through his trademark blend of breathtakingly choreographed action sequences featuring balletic shoot-outs and spurting exit wounds combined with tragic and sentimental plots about the place of loyalty and honor in a corrupt and violent world. Certainly there is nothing new in suggesting that the action genre—dominated as it is by the display of male bodies and by hyperbolic performances of what it means to be a man—might provide a way to understand contemporary anxieties about gender and social roles. However, while Hollywood action films typically celebrate the male body in a very literal way (with the protagonist exposing his muscular, and frequently wounded, torso), Woo's films valorize a model of masculinity that combines an understated emotional intensity with the physical strength and expertise of a deadly killer. This is a masculinity which celebrates both strength and intimacy, and where male bonding can suggest an erotic charge without the associated anxiety such relation-

ships often trigger within the Hollywood action genre.

Despite the fact that he has been making films for over 20 years, for many of Woo's fans it is only the films released since 1986 that are quintessentially "Woo." Indeed, as Baker suggests, Woo's 1986 *A Better Tomorrow* is hailed by many as the film that reinvented the Hong Kong action film genre, breaking out of the martial arts mold and shifting the action from kung fu to handguns. It also broke box-office records and relaunched Woo's career from the moderately successful romantic comedies and musicals he had been making since the mid-1970s. After reinventing the Hong Kong action genre, Woo then reinvented himself—leaving Hong Kong in 1992 for the U.S., and becoming the first Asian film-maker to direct a major Hollywood studio picture. However, while *Hard Target* (1993) and *Broken Arrow* (1996) may have marked Woo's official arrival in the U.S., many fans and critics still consider his Hong Kong masterpieces such as *A Better Tomorrow*, *A Better Tomorrow 2* (1987), *The Killer* (1989), *Bullet in the Head* (1990), and *Hard-Boiled* (1992) to be the best examples of his work to date.

It is these post-1986 gangster films that are the ones most frequently shown in theaters and available to rent, and the films that fans and critics are therefore most likely to see.[5] (Even though video releases of Woo's earlier films are available, they are difficult to find and generally of very poor quality.[6]) The almost exclusive focus on Woo's later films can thus be seen, at least in part, as merely a question of marketing and distribution. But as his invention of the "heroic bloodshed" subgenre suggests, there are also significant stylistic differences between early (that is, pre-1986) and late Woo.[7] Few directors are considered so distinctive that their names are attached to the kinds of filmic motifs they use, but Woo is one of them, and among fans of Hong Kong cinema (at least in the U.S. and U.K.) to say a film is "Woo-esque" brings to mind the distinctive way he has juxtaposed, in his later films, frenzied and violent action with heartrending tales of betrayal, loyalty, and chivalry among men.

While it is possible to read these male friendships in terms of the circulation of homoerotic tensions and desires (and many reviewers and critics have done so), relegating male intimacy to the realm of homosexuality also offers little to challenge contemporary stereotypes about gender and sexuality. It merely recontains intimate friendships within the realm of the erotic. Woo's films, by contrast, suggest a cultural fantasy about gender and sexuality in which intimacy is valorized and celebrated as an important and necessary aspect to all relationships—both sexual and platonic. His films contain a vision of masculinity that allows men to be simultaneously tough action heroes as well as what is often called "emotionally present." This combination of emotional and physical presence provides an interesting challenge to stereotypical notions of what it means to be a male action hero.

Although Woo is now firmly situated within Hollywood, it is important to remember the cultural context out of which he emerged. While many critics emphasize the homoeroticism of Woo's films, Chinese-American fans often resist these kinds of interpretations, arguing that the male-bonding found in Woo's work is merely a cinematic representation of the kind of relationships of honor between men found in Chinese historical chivalric dramas.[8] Hong Kong critics have, moreover, frequently dismissed Woo's success in the West as merely an example of Orientalism.[9] Certainly, as Tony Rayns points out, few American fans probably realize the debt Woo's films owe to the Chinese *wuxia pian* (martial chivalry genre) of the 1960s.[10] In particular, Woo's use of stoic heroes who kill dozens of foes while remaining committed to a strong sense of honor and chivalry is indebted to earlier martial arts films by directors such as Chang Cheh, whose earlier "swordplay bloodshed" films look back nostalgically to the destruction of the Shaolin Temple in 1736 and the subsequent dissemination of kung fu throughout China. Woo's films are similarly nostalgic for the commitment to honor and chivalry promoted by kung fu, and he incorporates these values into his own stories about the triads [criminal organizations] in contemporary Hong Kong.

Woo's relationship to Hong Kong remains, however, somewhat ambivalent. Not only did he emigrate to the U.S., but the influences he cites in interviews are primarily Western film-makers such as Sam Peckinpah, Elia Kazan, and Martin Scorsese.[11] Clearly it would be absurd to argue that his films are devoid of Chinese and/or Hong Kong cultural influences, but Woo's success with non-Chinese-American audiences suggests that a reading "outside" of these references is still both possible and productive.[12] Hong Kong's film industry is the third largest in the world (after India and the U.S.), and the fact that there is such a large Chinese community in the U.S. has clearly facilitated the marketing and distribution of Woo's films. It is also more than just a cultural and historical accident that certain kinds of Hong Kong

Chow Yun-fat (left) and Danny Lee in *The Killer*

cinema are currently so popular within the U.S.[13] The fact that Woo's popularity in the U.S. transcends ethnic identity indicates that his films can be usefully (if not completely) understood within the terms of Western discourse. They draw upon elements and conventions from a variety of genres (including action, buddy films, gangsters, Westerns, romantic melodramas, and even comedy) and combine, or at least bridge the gap between, "women's" genres such as romance and melodramas, and "men's" genres, especially action and gangster films.[14] The way Woo brings together personal emotional concerns of home and domesticity with public issues of professionalism and law and order is one of the most interesting features of his work, and is intimately related to his reinvention of masculinity.

A Better Tomorrow and *A Better Tomorrow 2* both star Chow Yun-fat as a gangster hero out to avenge betrayal and injustice within the triads. The theme of honor and loyalty among heroes recurs throughout Woo's work and the Chow Yun-fat characters (Mark in *A Better Tomorrow*, his twin brother Ken in *A Better Tomorrow 2*) epitomize this quality. Mark and Ken may be "criminals," but they use their strength not to promote violence but to combat injustice. Woo says that when he first cast Chow Yun-fat in *A Better Tomorrow* he was looking for a "modern knight . . . a strong man with a good heart," someone who could portray the chivalry, honor, and loyalty associated with the ancient knights.[15] Throughout his collaboration with Woo, Chow Yun-fat has played these characters with remarkable grace and screen presence. When Woo cast him as the gangster hero in that film, it marked not only the beginning of a close friendship and collaboration between the two men, but also a career change for Chow (who had previously been a romantic lead in television soaps and B-grade films) that parallels Woo's own.

Both *A Better Tomorrow* and *A Better Tomorrow 2* concern the plight of gangsters once they have left

Chow Yun-fat in
A Better Tomorrow

the fold. In *A Better Tomorrow,* Mark and his colleague Ho (Ti Lung) are betrayed by a former associate in their counterfeiting syndicate. No longer glamorous and rich, Mark is reduced to living in rags in a carpark and cleaning the cars of his former colleagues. Ho serves a jail term in Taiwan and returns to Hong Kong with the intention of leading a new life. A parallel plot concerns the relationship between the gangster, Ho, and his brother Kit (Leslie Cheung), a cop. Kit is a dedicated policeman who blames Ho for their father's death and his own failure to get a promotion. As a cop who doesn't always play by the book, Kit is another version of Mark and Ho—a loner hero with his own sense of morality and justice. The final shoot-out brings the three men together, and they are then able to put aside their differences and join forces to overcome their common enemy, the vicious counterfeiting ring.

Mark dies at the end of *A Better Tomorrow*, but Chow Yun-fat returns in *A Better Tomorrow 2* as Mark's twin brother Ken, who has given up the gangster life and opened a Chinese restaurant in New York. The film makes fun of itself by playing up Chow Yun-fat's return, with characters repeatedly commenting on Ken's similarity to his "brother," Mark. The film also sees the return of Kit and Ho, who are sent undercover to expose a counterfeiting ring. A shipyard owned by Lung, a reformed triad leader and counterfeiter, is taken over by a gang to use in smuggling their counterfeit money. Lung escapes to the U.S. for protection and ends up, through a series of events, with Ken. The two return to Hong Kong and team up with Ho, Kit, and another character from the first movie, also called Ken, who owns a taxi company for ex-cons. Kit is killed investigating the counterfeiters' operations, but the remaining heroes take their revenge and destroy the gang in a sustained and bloody siege.

While it might seem counterintuitive to suggest that violent action films with body counts that reach the hundreds can offer any kind of redeeming social fantasy, the way in which Woo incorporates the buddy and romance elements into action films such as *A Better Tomorrow* and *A Better Tomorrow 2* suggests a model of masculinity that recuperates strength and honor without sacrificing emotional intimacy. Specifically, the ways in which the spectacle of violence propels, rather than interrupts, the narrative indicates how Woo's model of masculinity provides an important counterpoint to the kind of film theory which frequently assumes that the realm of spectacle is reserved only for women and that spectacle always

draws the story to a halt. Indeed, in a 1983 article, Steve Neale critiqued this model of spectacle and narrative as proposed by Laura Mulvey, arguing that there are many films—especially Westerns, action films, and musicals—in which it is men and not women who occupy the position of spectacle.[16] Furthermore, while Mulvey argues that spectacle interrupts the narrative and provides an opportunity for women to embody "to-be-looked-at-ness," Neale suggests that while men are indeed put in the position of being looked at during moments of "spectacular masculinity," they are also, importantly, furthering the story. As he argues in the context of the Western, "The shoot-outs are moments of spectacle, points at which the narrative hesitates, comes to a momentary halt, but they are also points at which the drama is finally resolved, a suspense in the culmination of narrative drive."[17] This allows men to be on the receiving end of what Mulvey has called both the voyeuristic gaze and fetishistic scopophilia—men embody, in other words, both "to-be-looked-at-ness" and social power. However, Neale uncritically reproduces certain aspects of Mulvey's thesis by assuming that the sadistic gaze of the spectator and the cinematic apparatus necessarily "feminize" men by making them the objects of desire. For Neale, any objectification automatically means feminization, and feminization automatically means disempowerment. Yet, rather than being a process of disempowerment, masculinity frequently derives considerable social and sexual power from being represented as castrated and wounded.[18] Furthermore, eliding feminization with disempowerment reproduces a notion of femininity as always an identity of social degradation.

Neale's argument is still useful, however, because it provides a way to understand the model of masculinity offered in Woo's films. In *A Better Tomorrow* and *A Better Tomorrow 2*, Woo, by bringing together intimacy and action during moments of spectacular masculinity, thematizes the split (and the need for reconnection) between the world of affect and the world of work; or, in film terms, between the twin impulses of spectacle and narrative. This desire to bring together work and friendship is even more powerfully demonstrated in Woo's most critically acclaimed work, *The Killer*, where the central relationship is between two men who put aside their differences to fight for a common goal. The moments of action in *The Killer* facilitate the moments of friendship, and both are necessary for the resolution of the narrative.

The Killer features two loner heroes, a hit man and a police officer, who discover that although they are on opposite sides of the law, they share a sense of morality and justice that transcends their different social roles. Jeff (Chow Yun-fat), a hired killer trying to quit the business, accidentally blinds a nightclub singer (Sally Yeh) during one of his hits, and he agrees to do just one more job to pay for her cornea transplants. Jeff is double-crossed by his bosses, however, and ends up being pursued by both the gangsters and the police officer, Inspector Li (Danny Lee). A romance develops between Jeff and the singer, Jenny, but the central relationship is really between Jeff and Li, who are drawn to each other until, in the final shoot-out, they come together to defeat the other gangsters.

The final scenes of *The Killer* perfectly exemplify Neale's argument about the importance of spectacle within male action films. Essentially, Jeff and Li join forces to defeat the "bad" gangsters, and this final shoot-out is marked by moments when they fire their weapons in harmony, gaze longingly into each other's eyes, and move in synchronized time and motion. These intimate moments, occurring within the spectacle of violence, express the love and friendship between these two men. The shoot-out is certainly impressive as an action sequence, but it is made all the more compelling and interesting by these trademark moments of intimacy. This emphasis on both spectacle and narrative—intimacy and action—suggests that, for Woo, even men who are action heroes would do well to acknowledge their emotions.

In a style that is quite different from the rest of his later films, *Bullet in the Head* is one of Woo's bleakest meditations on male bonding and violence and depicts the ways in which violence and greed can undermine and threaten male intimacy. Three friends (Tony Leung, Jacky Cheung, and Waise Lee) grow up in the slums of Hong Kong, but are forced to flee when Ben (Leung) accidentally kills a gang leader. Hoping to avoid a gang confrontation (and, they also hope, to make their millions as smugglers), the three friends leave for Vietnam. Thrown into a country torn apart by war, their loyalty to one another is put to the ultimate test. The three men meet Luke (Simon Yam), a hit man who involves them in a plan to steal gold from a local gang leader. After a violent shoot-out they escape with the gold, but are soon captured as spies by the Vietcong. In a scene that is clearly an homage to *The Deer Hunter*, the three are brutally interrogated by the Vietcong until Luke rescues them. Paul (Lee), overcome with greed for the gold, then shoots Frank in the head when his hysterical screams threaten to re-

veal their whereabouts. Frank does not die, however, but goes insane and becomes addicted to morphine to live with the pain from the bullet (and, presumably, with the memory of what his "friend" has done to him). Ben, determined to avenge him, hunts Paul down and kills him. Although the film is ostensibly about the three friends, some of the most compelling scenes occur between Luke and Ben. From the moment they gaze into each other's eyes (literally, and in a men's bathroom) they are friends who know the true value of loyalty and honor. It is Ben and Luke, not Ben and his childhood friends, who join up together, and, like Jeff and Li in *The Killer*, their screen presence is invariably marked by soft focus and romantic music.

Bullet in the Head essentially depicts the precariousness of male friendships when dislocated from work or family. It also suggests that while violence can facilitate male bonding, it can also, importantly, undermine it. By contrast, *Hard-Boiled*, Woo's last—and most violent—Hong Kong film, paradoxically offers the most recuperable vision of the relationship between male bonding, violence, and social justice. The film is famous for its two over-the-top shoot-out sequences; the final shoot-out (during which an entire hospital is essentially destroyed) in fact occupies a third of the film—45 minutes of pure action during which the plot is basically put on hold. *Hard-Boiled* also features the latest (to date) incarnation of Chow Yun-fat as the suave but deadly gangster hero. This time, however, Chow is a loner cop called Tequila.[19]

In the shoot-out that opens the film, during which a tea room is riddled with machine gunfire and dozens of bystanders are indiscriminately gunned down, Tequila accidentally shoots an undercover cop. The issue of "real" and "undercover" identities, especially for the police, is a theme Woo first explored in *A Better Tomorrow 2,* where Ho and Kit go undercover for the police. In *Hard-Boiled,* the issue of undercover cops is once again crucial when Tequila encounters an apparent triad hit man (who he gradually deduces is actually a cop) who has infiltrated the gun-smuggling gang that Tequila wants to bust. This cop, Tony (Tony Leung), and Tequila come into conflict, but eventually team up to defeat the arms-smuggling operations of the bad guy, Johnny Wong (Anthony Wong), who has secretly purchased the hospital and stores his weapons under the morgue. Reinforcing the special place *Hard-Boiled* has in his oeuvre, Woo himself appears in a cameo role. He plays a retired cop who dispenses advice on trust and honor in the jazz bar he runs—the same jazz bar in which Tequila hangs out.

The relationships the men have with each other in Woo's Hong Kong films are consistently more meaningful and satisfying than the relationships they have with women. This is a common theme within the buddy film, and, as with other buddy narratives, Woo's films feature two or more men who are able to put aside their differences in order to join forces and overcome their common enemy. The buddies are almost always explicitly heterosexual, and so the friendship is ostensibly based upon loyalty and camaraderie rather than sex. In spite of this, these male relationships are often depicted as intensely intimate, and the (admittedly rare) appearance of women or families often cause men nothing but trouble. The ideal relationship is therefore invariably between two men who work together and who have no family or spouse.[20]

This is one of the ways in which Woo's films diverge from the conventional buddy genre. U.S. buddy films often have parallel plots operating on the personal and public levels and the finale resolves and brings the two together. *Die Hard* (1988) is a good example (especially since Woo's *Hard-Boiled* has been described as "*Die Hard* in a hospital"). New York loner cop John McClane (Bruce Willis) singlehandedly saves a Japanese corporate high rise that is threatened by European techno-villains. McClane saves the building with the help of Al Powell (Reginald Vel Johnson), a black cop with whom he communicates throughout the film via walkie-talkie. Saving the office block is the central "public" concern of the film, while McClane's failing marriage constitutes the "personal" problem. The two men don't meet until the crisis is over but McClane, bloody and tired, confesses his feelings to Al by walkie-talkie from the men's bathroom, asking him to tell his wife that he loves her (she is serendipitously inside the office building McClane must save). The relationship that develops between McClane and Powell facilitates the successful defeat of the villains as well as the reunion of the McClanes. The resolution of both the personal and public conflicts are, therefore, facilitated by McClane's saving the office block, but they occur on different narrative levels and are only brought together in the final moments of the film. In some senses it is the celluloid itself, rather than the narrative, that brings together the public and private worlds.

By contrast, in Woo's films the personal dilemmas are always already part of the public ones. Woo's heroes succeed at their jobs, and attain a personal sense of fulfillment by simultaneously negotiating their personal and public concerns via their friendships with each other. This is partly due to the fact that there are simply no central female characters in Woo's

Chow Yun-fat in *Hard-Boiled*

films and the heroes rarely have girlfriends or wives. A notable exception is *Hard-Boiled,* where Tequila's sometime girlfriend (Theresa) is another cop who also helps save the hospital. Although in many ways this reinforces the film's commitment to unifying the personal and the professional, the heterosexual relationship is clearly subordinated to the more intense relationship between Tequila and Tony, and the hospital is, in fact, saved by the two men negotiating their personal and professional concerns with each other. Indeed, saving the hospital and getting the villains becomes almost secondary to working through their own relationship. In particular, the two men bond over Tony's realization that, in the midst of the shoot-out in the hospital, he has accidentally killed another cop. Traumatized by this realization, Tony almost loses his cool, until Tequila shares his own experience of accidentally killing an undercover cop at the teahouse. Thus, whereas in *Die Hard* McClane shares his innermost feelings with Powell so he can win back his estranged wife, in *Hard-Boiled* Tequila and Tony share personal feelings with each other to enrich their relationship with each other. Male intimacy here has a value in and of itself.

As Robin Wood has argued, most films that allow male bonding to suggest any kind of intimacy will include a homophobic disclaimer (such as finally reuniting the men with female companions) in order to reduce the possibility of a homosexual subtext.[21] Woo's Hong Kong films, by contrast, rarely end with such a disclaimer and offer a more positive vision of men working together. The world of work becomes a world in which relationships based on sharing and trust are both valued and cherished. If Wood's notion of the homophobic disclaimer serves to separate the men and reunite them with women, Woo's formulation (despite excluding women) paradoxically suggests a more utopic fantasy. The importance of both narrative and spectacle in the representation of masculinity suggests, therefore, that it is not a question so much of bringing the work and domestic realms together as it is a question of bringing the personal affective emotions (traditionally associated with family life) into the realm of work.

As with many buddy movies, however, the moments of intimacy can only occur when facilitated by violence, and throughout Woo's films the heroes are constantly subjected to pain. Indeed, the most intimate moments occur when one or the other is wounded and being nursed by the other. *Bullet in the Head, A Better Tomorrow,* and *The Killer* all feature numerous moments where the men, while tending to each other's wounds, are able to touch each other's bodies and talk about love, loyalty, and brotherhood. Clearly these

moments of "spectacular masculinity" enable the demands of both spectacle (men getting wounded) and narrative (the men joining forces to defeat a common enemy) to be met in a way that is appropriate to the generic requirements of action films. The more intense the violence, moreover, the more intimate the men can be. Indeed, they often share their feelings for each other during the climactic shoot-out: in both *The Killer* and *Hard-Boiled* the men bond amid a shower of bullets and blood. The realm of male intimacy thus becomes a place where we see the anxieties of contemporary homophobic culture acted out—the violence simultaneously authorizes the intimacy and punishes the men for their feelings. The violence operates in the same way at the level of the audience—providing a pretext for enjoying the spectacle of male bodies and intimacy between men while punishing us with explosions and sympathetic pain.

Compared to the kind of intimacy the men experience with each other, the affection they have for women is generally chaste and lacking in any real desire. The male characters not only have great affection for each other, but also typically learn from each other to make themselves more whole, competent, and caring individuals. In *The Killer,* Li admires Jeff for being compassionate and, as he sits in his office staring at the pictures of Jeff he has plastered all over his wall, realizes that Jeff, in fact, has the compassion he lacks. Whereas Li (the policeman) cares little about the innocent bystander who dies of a heart attack in the bus ("How was I to know she had a bad heart?"), Jeff (the "killer") will risk his own life to save those caught in the crossfire. One of the central themes of *The Killer* is, therefore, the paradox of the compassionate assassin versus the ruthless cop, and what they can learn from each other—namely, to put their professional skills (that is, shooting) to socially productive ends and to value their commonalities rather than their differences. After all, as Jeff says to Li, "We both use guns for a living, but our motivations are different."

Within the contemporary U.S., domestic life is still considered to be the "haven in a heartless world."[22] We take it for granted that while work may be necessary, it will often be neither satisfying nor meaningful. As a reward for working we have our private intimate world of family and friends, a place where we can have meaningful and emotionally satisfying relationships and experiences. The realm of domestic life is also where we recharge out batteries so we can face the world of work the next day. As feminists have long argued, however, the realm of emotional and family life is not only connected to, but also interdependent with, the realm of professional life. And recent changes in work practices, together with a new awareness about family dynamics, make it increasingly difficult to sustain the work/family distinction.

Woo's films acknowledge that the distinction between work and home is no longer tenable by bringing the two realms together and presenting an alternative to their division through the intimacy of male friendships. Woo's films, after all, suggest a nostalgia for male intimacy. Indeed, it is interesting that the technique he uses to indicate emotional feelings (dissolves) is the technique U.S. audiences typically associate with flashbacks. Woo has said that he often feels frustrated that spectators do not always understand what his intentions are when he does this,[23] and yet, in many ways, this mixed message perfectly underscores the ways in which his films can be read. Woo's heroes (and presumably his fans as well) are nostalgic for a time when male intimacy was a celebrated and valorized aspect of masculinity.

It is important to remember, however, that the world Woo depicts in his Hong Kong films—in which our co-workers are also our family—is also a male-defined work-family. The specter of misogyny in Woo's films is hard to ignore. It is true that focusing on this surface reality takes something literally that could be read as metaphorical. Even when there are women in Woo's films, however, they invariably cause trouble for the men, suggesting that the utopic moment of public/private breakdown facilitated by the male bonding demands that women are marginalized or excluded. In other words, an uncritical celebration of the spectacle of male intimacy—simply on the basis that it challenges existing notions of masculinity—could be dangerous. Woo may be reinventing masculinity, but its connection to social power and the place for women within his vision remains uncertain.

While women have only marginal social and sexual roles in his Hong Kong films, all this changed when Woo moved to the U.S. Indeed, it is noteworthy that in his two Hollywood films to date, Woo has paired a male hero with a female partner, rather than with another man. However, while this ostensibly offers the possibility for a reinvention of femininity, the cost has been that Woo's notion of masculinity, and his vision of intimacy between men, falls by the wayside.

Loosely based on Richard Connell's short story "The Most Dangerous Game," *Hard Target* stars Jean-Claude Van Damme as Chance Boudreaux, a man living on the margins—both economic and social—of New Orleans society. He teams up with Natasha Binder (Yancy Butler) to track down a team of multinational villains who travel the world charging rich men with militia fantasies half a million dollars to hunt human prey. The prey, all homeless men without families, earn $10,000 if they make it across the river in 24 hours. The damage inflicted on men who have neither work nor family is powerfully portrayed. The lure of the $10,000 offered the homeless men who participate in the "game" (Fouchon, the leader of the villains, gets one homeless man to "play" by saying, "Money can make you a man again") is contrasted with the $200 that Boudreaux wants for joining forces with Binder (it's the cost of his union dues).

However, unlike the heroes played by Chow Yun-fat (who only expose their bodies when having wounds dressed), the camera focuses on Van Damme's body in a much more explicitly sexual manner, particularly in the final shoot-out, where he strips down to his undershirt. As the object of the cinematic gaze, Van Damme is sexualized in a way that Woo's Hong Kong heroes are not. Indeed, while they never act strictly as a "team," the pairing of Binder with Boudreaux precludes the kind of male intimacy found in Woo's Hong Kong films. While Fouchon and Boudreaux are clearly established as two versions of marginalized masculinity (both are loners who travel the world—Fouchon playing his "game" and Boudreaux as a sailor), they are not doubles in the way that Jeff and Li in *The Killer* are. They cannot join together to fight a common enemy because they lack the same sense of honor such collaboration requires. As homeless advocate, Boudreaux is clearly established as the hero, but the lack of ambiguity surrounding both his and Fouchon's characters precludes the possibility of connection or redemption for either.

In *Hard Target*, Lance Henriksen's Fouchon echoes the characters played by Chow Yun-fat in Woo's Hong Kong films; particularly in the appropriation of the stylish suits and trenchcoat worn by Mark and Jeff in *A Better Tomorrow* and *The Killer*. But there the similarities end. Certainly, they both acknowledge the lure of the violent life—Fouchon asks one successful hunter, "It's a drug, isn't it? Bringing a man down," which is clearly a reference to Jeff's famous speech in *The Killer* where he discusses how addictive his lifestyle is, saying "[guns] are easy to pick up, hard to put down." But the impulse to kill within each man is quite different. Fouchon preys upon men who are hon-

Jean-Claude Van Damme in *Hard Target*

orable but down on their luck, while Jeff and Mark kill powerful and corrupt triad members. Fouchon's sense of masculinity rests upon killing men who are weaker than himself, whereas Jeff and Mark are romantics who kill wealthy and corrupt men because they are nostalgic for a less mercenary and more humane world.

Whereas in *Hard Target* Boudreaux is a loner who temporarily teams up with Binder, in *Broken Arrow* fighter pilots Vic Deakins (John Travolta) and Riley Hale (Christian Slater) start off as a team early in the film, but later fall apart. As men who both love the power of flying nuclear weapons on secret missions, they are two sides of the same coin, but they do not let their commonalities bring them together, and instead the film depicts a clear-cut fight between "good" and "bad." During a mission, Deakins steals two nuclear warheads, leaving Hale and park ranger Terry Carmichael (Samantha Mathis) up against Deakins and his cohort of international villains. While the doubling in Woo's films such as *The Killer* and *Hard-Boiled* foregrounds the desire to reconnect disparate men with a shared vision, Deakins and Hale are so clearly established as the villain and hero that it precludes the possibility of joining to fight a common enemy. And by having Hale team up with Carmichael against Deakins, Woo displaces the redemptive and transformative effects of male intimacy onto a more conventional heterosexual coupling.

In Carmichael, however, we have a genuine female hero. She is strong, smart, principled, and brave. Moreover, even though they are numerous sexual innuendoes between them—at one point Hale says to Carmichael after a shoot-out, "You can come now," which she echoes back to him, "OK, you can come now" after another, even more impressive action sequence—they are first and foremost a team. The final scene of the film is not of them kissing as lovers, but of them shaking hands as partners. Nevertheless, the intimacy, trust, and friendship they share are here deployed in the service of heterosexuality, rather than to foster male bonding or a more fluid sense of masculinity. In other words, while both spectacle and narrative are essential to resolve the plot, the heterosexual underpinnings of the intimacy makes *Broken Arrow* quite different—in terms of its vision of masculinity—from Woo's earlier films.

Both *Hard Target* and *Broken Arrow* are more explicitly sexual than Woo's Hong Kong films. While the male bonding in *A Better Tomorrow*, *A Better Tomorrow 2*, *The Killer*, *Bullet in the Head*, and *Hard-Boiled* contains homoerotic elements, the emphasis is

Chow Yun-fat (top) and Danny Lee in *The Killer*

always on romance and intimacy rather than on repressed sexual desire, and there is none of the nervousness surrounding their bonding that is found in Woo's Hollywood films. By contrast, in *Hard Target* and *Broken Arrow,* slurs about the hero's manhood abound—early in *Broken Arrow*, for example, referring to the fact that he almost asked Hale to join him in stealing the weapons, Deakins says to Hale, "You haven't got the balls to go through with it," and later Deakins refers to Hale as "100-percent pussy." Such comments are not unusual for a Hollywood action film, but are jarring in a film directed by Woo, since his heroes typically have a much more secure sense of identity. The ambiguity surrounding each man's masculinity is ultimately recontained, however, by the homophobic disclaimer with which each film ends. While Woo's Hong Kong films allow ambiguity about the nature of "hero" and "villain," *Hard Target* and *Broken Arrow* allow none of this confusion and instead displace anxieties about each man's allegiances onto ambiguity about their masculinity. In this way, Woo's Hollywood films follow much more closely the traditional U.S. action buddy film—full of nervous jokes about violence being a substitute for sex, and anxieties about what it means to be a man. Indeed, it is no accident that Woo's move to Hollywood and the generic action film coincides with his turn to more stereotypical depictions of masculinity.

While his Hollywood films retain the powerful sense of humanity that pervades his earlier work, it is nevertheless to Woo's Hong Kong films we must return to see his reinvention of masculinity. Even though these "heroic bloodshed" films often seem to conflate violence with honor and justice, at least during this violence men are able to relate to each other in an "intimate" way. By contrast, Woo's Hollywood films—constrained as they are by the generic traditions of the U.S. actioner—lack this redemptive quality. The heroes in *Hard Target* and *Broken Arrow* certainly display "to-be-looked-at-ness" combined with social power, but these moments of "spectacular masculinity" always rest upon a heterosexual alibi, thus reinforcing stereotypical notions of gender and sexuality. Yet the popularity of Woo's Hong Kong films in the U.S. suggests that audiences enjoy and appreciate (and are ready for) male heroes who can also be vulnerable and emotionally present. Films such as *A Better Tomorrow*, *The Killer*, and *Hard-Boiled* offer a positive and transformative vision of masculinity that acknowledges the value of male intimacy—an important critique of patriarchal gender relations that is much needed in our own sociohistorical moment. Woo is not only a film-maker able to create extraordinarily beautiful action sequences, but he is also an artist with an innovative and powerful vision of human relationships. Hollywood has certainly discovered Woo's skills as an action director. But his reinvention of masculinity within the U.S. context remains—as yet—unrealized.

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Notes

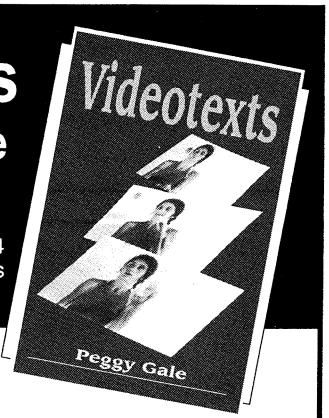
This article has benefited from the insights and support of a number of friends and colleagues. In particular I would like to thank Nick Chapman, who not only introduced me to Hong Kong movies but also gave me considerable help during the early stages of writing. I am also indebted to Annalee Newitz and Matt Reynolds, who read and commented upon various drafts of this article.

1. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1975), pp. 6–18.
2. Lee Grieveson, "Reviews," *Screen*, vol. 35, no. 4 (1994), pp. 405–6.
3. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, "Introduction," in *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema,* Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, eds, (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.
4. Baker coined the term "heroic bloodshed" to describe the new subgenre of Hong Kong films (exemplified best in the collaborative work of John Woo with actor Chow Yun-fat from 1986 to 1992) in which gunplay replaced the earlier emphasis on kung fu. Rick Baker and Toby Russell, *The Essential Guide to Hong Kong Movies* (London: Eastern Heroes Publications, 1994).
5. Although my personal experience of theatrical releases extends only to the San Francisco Bay Area, newspaper reviews and discussions on Internet news-groups (such as "alt.asian-movies" and "soc.culture.hongkong.entertainment") confirm the fact that theaters in other parts of the U.S. tend to show the same Woo films. Furthermore, Woo's early work seems to be more or less unavailable on video, at least with subtitles, whereas his gangster films are increasingly available (and in increasingly good prints) at video stores throughout the country.
6. One common problem is for the subtitles to extend below the bottom of the screen.
7. I have argued elsewhere that the shift in the films' style and content was by no means an arbitrary one; it can be traced to the historical moment from which they emerge. Specifically, the role of the loner hero can be read as a response to the social and political changes within contemporary Hong Kong in light of the reunification with China in 1997. In his films Woo seems to suggest that the future of Hong Kong lies in maintaining a balance between corporate capitalism and heroic individualism. See

Jillian Sandell, "A Better Tomorrow? American Masochism and Hong Kong Action Films," *Bad Subjects* 13 (April 1994), pp. 8–13 (reprinted in *Bright Lights Film Journal*, no.13 [1994], pp. 40–50).

8. I am indebted to Hugh Kim for information about the place of brotherhood and honor within the Chinese literary tradition.
9. Berenice Reynaud, "John Woo's Art Action Movie," *Sight and Sound*, vol. 3, no. 5 (May 1993), p. 23.
10. Tony Rayns, "*The Killer*," *Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1990, p. 260.
11. The elision between Woo's own national identity and his place within the filmic tradition is further emphasized in the way that critics frequently describe Woo as emigrating to Hollywood, rather than to the U.S. (see, for example, Richard Corliss, "Asian Invasion," *Time*, August 14, 1995, p. 62).
12. While auteur theory film theory has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on the intentions of the director, I would note, as a personal aside, that after the publication of an article I wrote on homoeroticism and masochism in his movies (see note 7) John Woo contacted me to say how much he had enjoyed my article. While he may not have intended the homoerotic and masochistic themes, his response suggests that he was, nevertheless, not opposed to such an interpretation.
13. The influence of the Chinese-American community in the spread of Hong Kong films is not as pronounced as might be expected. At present, there seem to be two largely separate structures for the distribution of Hong Kong films and videos in the United States—one inside the Chinatowns of major North American cities and one outside. Indeed, Chinatown theaters and video rental stores are almost impenetrable, at least in the San Francisco Bay Area, for outsiders: the theaters do not advertise in the English-language dailies, and signs at both stores and theaters are almost exclusively in Chinese. It is not, therefore, simply a case of people from Hong Kong and China bringing their culture with them and dispersing it within and beyond their own communities. Non-Chinatown theaters and video stores often rent and buy movies from different sources than those that supply the Chinese communities. Even though Hong Kong cinema may have originally been introduced with Chinese immigrants, non-Chinese-Americans have been active in marketing and distributing these films. In recent years, repertory movie houses and theaters specializing in art and foreign features—especially in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco—have been instrumental in bringing Hong Kong films to a wider, more ethnically diverse audience. Hong Kong production and distribution companies, sensing the profit potential in this larger market, have, over the past couple years, supported a number of Hong Kong "film festivals"—collections of their films which have played at these smaller theaters around the United States. This is reflected in audiences at non-Chinatown theaters, which are invariably of mixed ethnic backgrounds.
14. Indeed, conversations among fans on the Internet newsgroup alt.asian-movies suggests that John Woo is more popular among female spectators than other Hong Kong film-makers.
15. Jillian Sandell, "Interview with John Woo," *Bright Lights Film Journal*, no. 13 (1994), p. 38.
16. Steve Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle: Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema," reprinted in *Screening the Male*, pp. 9–20.
17. Neale, p. 18.
18. Cohan and Hark, p. 2.
19. Chow Yun-fat has said that he specifically asked Woo to shift the focus of male friendships away from the gangsters and toward the police to create better and more positive role models for young people in Hong Kong. See Bey Logan, "King Gangster" *Film Extremes* no. 1 (1993), pp. 16–23.
20. I am enormously indebted to Kathleen Moran and Joe Sartelle, whose thoughts and ideas about U.S. buddy films have been extremely influential in shaping my own understanding of them.
21. Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).
22. Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
23. Aljean Harmetz, "Toning Down, John Woo Earns His Hollywood R," *New York Times*, August 15, 1993, p. 11.

Videotexts
Peggy Gale



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Reviews

From the Journals of Jean Seberg

Writer/director/editor: Mark Rappaport. Cinematographer: Mark Daniels.

With its imaginative approach and visual variety, its surprising twists and sharp humor, Mark Rappaport's latest film seemed the most entertaining selection of the 1995 New York Film Festival, where it had its U.S. premiere. That may be an odd reaction to a fact-based film about a real person whose life was marked by tragedy, but *From the Journals of Jean Seberg* is far from a conventional biopic.

The film follows Seberg's career from her much publicized selection in 1956 as Otto Preminger's St. Joan, when she was not yet 18, to her suicide in 1979, at age 40. But it bypasses both strict chronology and any pretense of objectivity. Rappaport makes no attempt to reconstruct Seberg's life from photos, interviews with people who knew her, or similar archival material. Much like in *That's Entertainment!*, the visual "documentation" consists almost entirely of movie clips, including many from films in which Seberg herself does not appear. Thus nearly all of the key events in Seberg's life—including her marriage with twice-her-age Romain Gary, her support of black radicals, and her harassment by the FBI—have to be described by the narrator. But this narrator is "Jean Seberg" herself (played by Mary Beth Hurt), present onscreen as she comments on "her own" life from beyond death.[1]

Jean Seberg left no journals, and the deadpan yet profoundly moving first-person commentary is Rappaport's creation. He used a similar strategy in *Rock Hudson's Home Movies* (1992), in which Eric Farr appears as Rock Hudson commenting on clips of his Hollywood performances. But Hurt plays a more wide-ranging and challenging role. Besides amplifying events in Seberg's life and career, "Seberg" critiques many of her films and offers sharp, witty, sometimes acid comments on the movie industry, film technique, sexism, celebrity, and people whose lives impinged on hers.

The visuals match the freewheeling irreverence of the commentary. "Seberg" makes her first appearance by strolling (in color) into a black-and-white still from *Saint Joan* dressed as the *International Herald Tribune* vendor from *Breathless*; later she appears in a *Breathless* clip as a reflection, watching Seberg and Belmondo argue in front of a mirror. Sometimes the visuals are doctored in other ways. In the early section on *Saint Joan*, for example, as "Seberg" mentions that Barbra Streisand reportedly tried out for the role, a vignette of Streisand's head singing "People" is joined to Seberg's body in the stake burning scene. Even when the tone is more serious, the interaction of visuals and commentary offers a kaleidoscopic experience that consistently entertains and amuses even as it offers a mordant commentary on audience assumptions of the past and the present.

At the same time, the text of the film is so dense and complex that its details cannot be grasped at one viewing. My screening notes recorded clips from *Picnic* and the original *Sabrina* in the section on *Saint Joan*, but I couldn't remember why on earth they were there. The answer: "Seberg" says that her amateur stage experience prior to *Joan* included the lead in *Picnic*; that there were two kinds of movies in the 50s, sex melodrama and sex comedy; that *Sabrina* (an example of the latter) is about a simple girl who returns changed after a stay in Paris, and that "there was no going back for me, either" (after *Breathless* and her

(Left and previous page) Mary Beth Hurt as/and Jean Seberg

first marriage, to a young French film-maker). That rapid chain of associations sets the scene for issues developed later.

At first viewing, even *Journals'* longer sequences may seem too mercurial to leave a sustained impression. Here, though, structure and tempo clarify the blur of free associations and runaway details. Consider this disconcerting passage in the opening section on *Saint Joan*. Accompanied by clips from other Joan of Arc films, "Seberg" remarks that the role was a jinx. Falconetti, she says, never made another film and died of overeating in Buenos Aires; Ingrid Bergman was ostracized for her affair with Rossellini; and the character played by Alida Valli in *Miracle of the Bells* died immediately after portraying Joan in a film-within-the-film. Initially, much of this seems strained: Falconetti hadn't made any films *before* Dreyer's *Joan*, either, but she played the role afterward on the stage and didn't die until 1946; Valli's Joan-playing character was, of course, fictional. But the passage as a whole reflects the dizziness of Seberg's liftoff into the half-illusive world of Hollywood celebrity—and into vulnerability.

At the end of that passage "Seberg" says, "Later the curse of Joan took over, and J. Edgar Hoover destroyed my life and career." Here the film sounds its first somber note. Shortly afterward there's a wry echo of it when "Seberg" points to the technical mishap that scorched her in the burning scene: "That was the first time I was burned at the stake, but not the last." After that, however, the political theme settles into a less anguished key with the taken-for-granted sexism of even the best of Seberg's movies: *Breathless* ("woman as betrayer") and *Lilith* ("just another femme fatale who happens to be schizophrenic").

The tone becomes somewhat more caustic but scarcely less flip after the film introduces the activism of Seberg (pro-black) and her coevals Jane Fonda (anti-Vietnam War) and Vanessa Redgrave (pro-PLO)—"as if you had to pick a major." "Seberg" continues with biting comments on the trio's sexist screen roles, especially those chosen by husband Vadim for Fonda ("the first intergalactic sex kitten" in *Barbarella*) and by husband Gary for Seberg. Scenes from Gary's *Birds in Peru*, in which Seberg played an insatiable nymphomaniac, are followed by clips from other films based on his novels to illustrate "Seberg's" comment that all his woman characters are whores.

There's a fresh connection here with the FBI smear campaign, since Hoover termed Seberg a whore for associating with black radicals. But the tone appears to lighten as "Seberg" turns from *Peru* to the less

morbid sexism of *Paint Your Wagon* and Seberg's affair with costar Clint Eastwood. Suddenly the film pounces on Eastwood in his more typical roles, often that of a lawman as lawless as the FBI. Close-ups of him "looking at something . . . and waiting" are followed by clips of him shooting people: "Every close-up is a prelude to violence." Then come clips of characters peering through telescopes and binoculars in a parody of FBI-type surveillance. Back to Eastwood, this time to listen in: clips of him uttering monosyllables in his early movies, followed by his later "bons mots," which culminate in a shot of George Bush's "Read my lips," dubbed by "Seberg" as "Make my day."

As "Seberg" talks about the FBI smear and its aftermath she finally drops her detachment. Anger comes into her voice and then turns to grief as she talks of the death of her baby girl—the one about whom the FBI had spread the false rumor that she would be black. As "Seberg" runs quickly through her declining career to her death the mordant humor is muted. The ending has its own quiet note of emotion with a montage of clips from Seberg's early, youthful movies over which flames slowly rise until they fill the screen.

The horizontal complexity of *From the Journals of Jean Seberg* has a vertical counterpart. Consider the scenes that combine excerpts from *Saint Joan* with Hurt's commentary ("I had the energy and the will all right," but "Who on earth would follow this drum majorette into battle?"). Here we're confronted not only by a woman player (Hurt) representing a real woman (Seberg) speaking words written by a man (Rappaport) and under his direction, but also by a character (Joan) represented by the real woman (Seberg) speaking words written by two men (Shaw and screenwriter Graham Greene) and under the direction of yet another man (Preminger). Moreover, the concept of a dead woman reviewing her life echoes the ending of the Shaw play and Greene/Preminger film, in which Joan returns after 25 years to review the effect of *her* life. Similar tangles of gender and attribution recur throughout the film.

To compound the vertical complexity, "Seberg" discusses various film techniques and illusions, including the Kuleshov effect (in which the same close-up of a player with a neutral expression, when intercut with sad, light-hearted, and tempting scenes, is seen to portray different reactions). This digression is arrived at by way of the claim by Romain Gary (who was illegitimate) that his father was the actor Ivan Mozhukhin, who appeared in one of Kuleshov's montage experiments. Since the original experiment is lost, "Seberg" reconstructs it, first presenting a still of Mozhukhin intercut with shots of a dead woman, a child playing, and a plateful of food, and then running the shots again with Mozhukhin replaced by a close-up of Seberg from *Breathless*.

The Kuleshov sequence also implies that Seberg was treated as an object rather than a player. But the complex layering of the film, together with the ambiguity of "Seberg," can raise questions about Rappaport's own treatment of Seberg. At the Festival press conference, two attendees said they felt that Rappaport had (ab)used her. Was it fair for him to place his words into the mouth of "Seberg"—especially when those words often criticize "herself" and other women players? Is Seberg herself sacrificed on the altar of entertainment?

Hardly. In no way does the film sensationalize Seberg's life. It mentions only one of her many affairs and passes over the addictions and breakdowns of her final years. But there is a much more positive justification of Rappaport's strategy. With a "normal" narrator, whether speaking objectively or emotionally, Seberg would be subtly denatured, implicitly patronized as "poor Jean" who needs our continual sympathy. By contrast, the feistiness, sharp humor, and critical jabs of "Seberg" empower her.

Of course, this commentator liberated by death is not the biographical Seberg, who showed independence as a teenager[2] but was thrown into insecurity first by the *Joan* circus and Preminger's overbearing tutelage and later by marriage to a middle-aged Parisian intellectual. In this narrow sense Rappaport *is* using Seberg, and doing so partly to entertain. But if "Seberg" is fiction, *From the Journals* as a whole comes much closer to what we can know of reality.

The film's complexity and density of detail form larger patterns that reflect crises and developments in Seberg's life and career. There is another set of patterns that extends throughout *Journals*—the patterns of film-making itself. "Seberg's" mini-lectures on film technique (the Kuleshov effect, close-ups, reaction shots, looking and not looking at the camera, acting and nonacting) openly remind the viewer of the film-making process, as do Rappaport's own techniques (rapid cutting, screen splitting, and above all the compositing of Hurt with movie clips).

And it was film-making that determined the general course of Seberg's life from age 18, leading her to celebrity with *Saint Joan*, to France with *Bonjour Tristesse* (her second film for Preminger), and to Paris with *Breathless*. To put it metaphorically, her career began with a shock cut from unknown teenager to

international celebrity, and continued with a compositing and intercutting of conflicts—small-town America and intellectual France; old Hollywood and New Wave; wealth and concern for the poor; white and concern for blacks; a career of failure and success (and failure).

In "Seberg's" mini-lecture on the close-up, Seberg is contrasted with Garbo and Monroe, two stars who became and remain icons outside time. Their public image has little to do with their private life—quite ordinary for Garbo, tragic for Monroe. Seberg was a lesser star whose career rose and fell with her turbulent life, leaving her public image as a blur inside time, a figure tied to the past. Although film can replay the past as the present, biographical film-makers weaken this effect when (as usually happens) they segregate the narrator from the subject either in separate shots or as an offscreen voice. The subject becomes anterior to the narration.

Rappaport instead reinforces the presentness of his film documents by placing the narrator of *Journals* in the same frame and sometimes even in the same shot with Seberg and by giving both women the same notional identity. In so doing he rescues Seberg from the finality of the past, making his film not only a vivid entertainment but also a powerful and moving tribute.

WILLIAM JOHNSON

■ William Johnson is the New York Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

Notes

1. When Rappaport first decided to offer the role of "Seberg" to Hurt, he was unaware of a remarkable coincidence—that Hurt, like Seberg, grew up in Marshalltown, Iowa. Hurt, ten years younger, lived just around the corner from Seberg, had her as a babysitter, attended the same high school, and studied acting with the same Marshalltown teacher. Unlike Seberg, who became an instant celebrity when Otto Preminger chose her as the trophy of his much publicized international search for a Joan of Arc, Hurt took the slow route to an acting career. For viewers aware of the coincidence, Hurt's presence offers an apt counterpoint to Seberg's life.
2. At age 14, for example, Seberg joined the N.A.A.C.P. For a detailed account of Seberg's life see David Richards, *Played Out: The Jean Seberg Story* (New York: Random House, 1981).

From the Journals of Jean Seberg is distributed by Planet Pictures, in New York City.

Leaving Las Vegas

Writer/director: Mike Figgis. Producers: Lila Cazès, Annie Stewart. Cinematographer: Declan Quinn. Music: Figgis. United Artists.

It was only a matter of time before the American cinema offered more lower-depth perceptions of Las Vegas people; not the average, everyday denizens of that town, who have to work and thrive through its sunlit days, but the ephemeral night people who exist within the gaudy cocoon of gambling casinos, cocktail lounges, and the pavements of the neon-splendoured strip. Over the past decades, some efforts have touched upon the more venal aspects of Las Vegas, either romantically (*The Only Game in Town, One from the Heart*) or semi-dramatically, as if surveying the amoralities with sardonic humor (*Oceans Eleven, The Las Vegas Story, Five Against the House*). The 90s have explored an uncensored view of Las Vegas: Martin Scorsese's *Casino* (exposing the gangster milieu on a more psychological level than the too fictional *Bugsy*) reworked the interplay of ethnic loyalties and emotional betrayal (born in Hawks' *Scarface*), with DeNiro and Pesci as icons of this genre. Paul Verhoeven's *Showgirls* promised an insightful, authentic look at the women who performed in gaudy imitations of Paris's Lido, but settled for a sophomorically vulgar exercise in softcore pornography. Not surprisingly, it is Mike Figgis's *Leaving Las Vegas* that has caught the essence of tragedy in that city, as a background for doomed refugees from failed American dreams.

Two of Figgis's previous films, *Stormy Monday* and *Liebestraum*, should have prepared one for the indigo-hued evocation of despair and violence associated with the underworld, and he seems to have a pessimistic fascination with the human propensity for self-destruction. As writer-director, Figgis displays a wry detachment from his characters, half-sympathetic, half-disdainful. His omniscience is cruel, and *Leaving Las Vegas* is stripped of all sentiment, except pity perhaps, but even if this threatens to touch the spectator, the vile bodies before one are abruptly beheld as emblems of irrevocable disgust.

The story follows the decline and fall of a once successful Hollywood script-agent, Ben Sanderson (Nicolas Cage), who, after losing a wife and son through divorce, wholeheartedly decides to leave his shattered life and position and set off alone for Las Vegas. His goal is to kill himself by consuming inordinate amounts of alcohol, and to submit to whatever

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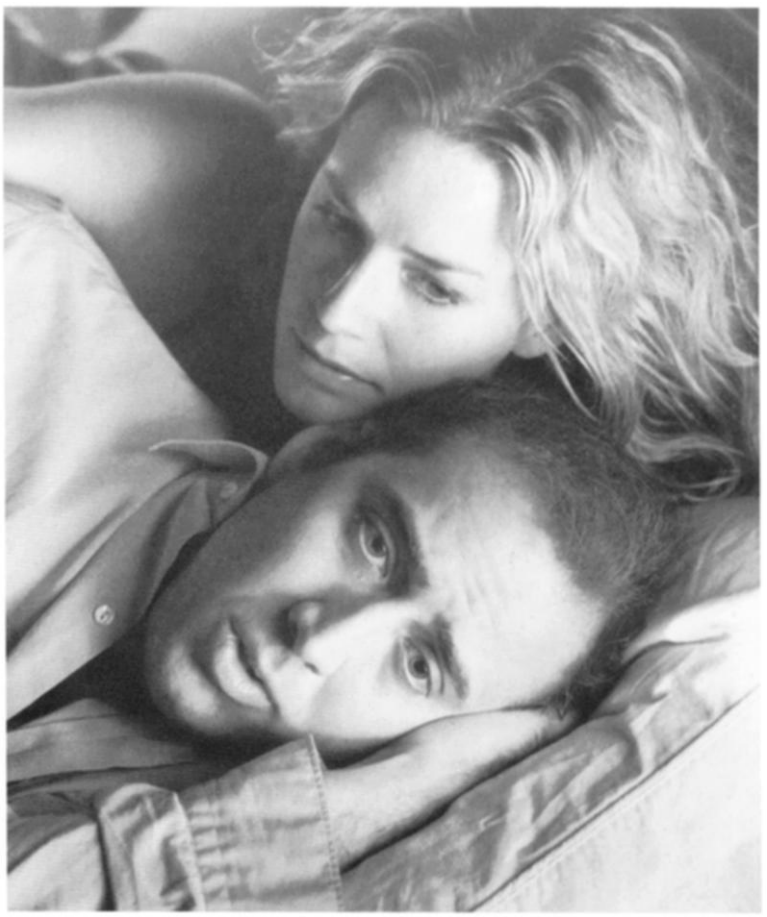


Nicolas Cage and
Elisabeth Shue in
Leaving Las Vegas

fleshly blandishments come his way. Before the title credits of the film, there is a prelude to this exasperated acceptance of death: Ben's embarrassing encounters with former associates in a nightclub; Ben's superkarket forays with a liquor cabinet of a grocery cart; his shame-faced acceptance of his final paycheck: each of these glimpses prepare one for Figgis's meticulous attention to Ben's determined self-obliteration.

His suicidal quest coincides with the emotional and physical struggles of a beautiful young prostitute, Sera (Elisabeth Shue). Sera's emotional enslavement to Yuri, her belligerent Latvian pimp (Julian Sands), is made more horrifying when it is later revealed that in moments of pique, he had punitively inscribed knife carvings on her buttocks (her revelations of abuse are confided to an offscreen person, which occasionally confuses the time sequence of the plot).

Ben and Sera meet as client and doxy, but their happenstance encounter is marked by the same undercurrent of despair that social outcasts can intuitively recognize in one another. The mechanics of loveless sex, familiar to her, become important as she decides to yield to a sympathetic attraction to Ben. At this point, Figgis and his cinematographer (Declan Quinn) move constantly closer to the protagonists: skin textures, garments, and the imagined odor of empty liquor bottles touch one's reactions, and the various tormented and tragic episodes in Ben and Sera's downward spiral continuously lower their self-esteem and disturb the spectator. These are truthful observations of people beyond rescue.

The crosscurrents of fate affect both characters as Figgis shows Sera's sudden loss of protection. Yuri has been on a doomed flight from vengeance, and his pursuers happen to be at the same gas station where Ben stops en route to Las Vegas. Ben crosses paths again with Yuri in a pawnshop, and later, Sera walks past the assassins as they close in on their prey. Sera's professional appeal is wavering as well; her gruff dismissal by a prospective middle-aged client at a casino-bar is made particularly wrenching because a more glamorous hooker (Mariska Hargitay) watches the scene bemusedly. Affected by Ben's honesty and need for solace, Sera decides to try and save his life, as a human antidote that will keep him on balance. When Ben warns, "Never, never ask me to stop drinking," it only brings out more of her ardor. The realism is palpable: Figgis's ear for the dialogue of his personal Las Vegas, for these miserable miscreants, makes every sentence ring true. Tentative gestures of compassion (Sera's gift of a hip flask), the images of these two in the red-blue-green neon nights, or their daylight moments of normalcy in a mall (when Sera tries on her gift of new earrings)—these things bring one closer to

the brief happinesses along their tragic journey. When separated from one another, Ben succumbs to bouts of delirium tremens, and Sera is victimized in a violent assault by a trio of collegians (Quinn provides a chilling close-up of one of their faces, the boyish face caught in a mask of evil).

There are certain great performances of the alcoholic hero in American films (Van Heflin in *Johnny Eager*, Gig Young in *Come Fill the Cup*, and Ray Milland in *The Lost Weekend* come to mind), and Nicholas Cage's portrayal of Ben Sanderson now joins them. His physical appearance and body language attest to the skill of his delineation of one who has lost the zest for caring. At one point, lying askew on Sera's couch in a boozy haze, he resembles a giant marmoset whose eyes move swiftly from joy to total despair, but their luster of indifference never fades. Elizabeth Shue complements Cage's portrayal. Her wholesome, athletic beauty camouflages deep psychic scars, and in the indefinable pain of her performance lies the effective understatement of tragedy as she is pushed farther and farther away from society. One knows that Sera survives Las Vegas, but that is not the same as knowing that she will survive her future.

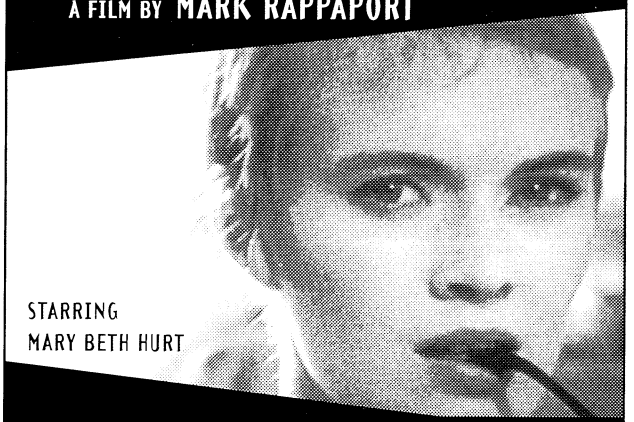
Since Cage and Shue dominate the film, the minor roles are very fleeting; only Julian Sands remains vivid as Sera's temporary nemesis, and his role exemplifies an amazing range of portrayals during his international film career. There are a few surprise cameo roles: Lou Rawls is a cabdriver who sympathizes with Sera; and in wordless glimpses, Mike Figgis is seen as one of Yuri's assassins, and director Vincent Ward is a partygoer when Yuri introduces Sera as the chief orgiaste.

Mike Figgis has arranged an excellent, soft-jazz musical score which also uses famous standards ("Come Rain or Come Shine" and, almost as a love motif, "My One and Only Love"), and Sting is heard on the sound track, giving voice to several threnodies which aptly evoke the blue-lit motels and brighter lights of Las Vegas that illuminate the pleasure-seekers and eliminate the shadowy struggles of those lost inhabitants who either fight for life or fight to flee from it.

ALBERT JOHNSON

■ Albert Johnson is a member of the *Film Quarterly* editorial board.

From the Journals of
Jean Seberg
A FILM BY MARK RAPPAPORT



"★★★★ A Masterpiece. What Seberg's audience did and didn't see in her films. Essential viewing."
– Jonathan Rosenbaum, Chicago Reader

"Speaks volumes about popular films as metaphor and mirror of the culture that produces it."
– David Sterritt, Christian Science Monitor

"An exhilarating rumination on celebrity, gender, filmmaking, politics, the sixties. A cinephile's delight!"
– Phillip Lopate, Film Comment

"A funny, sad and immensely clever deconstructive essay on actingand image in Hollywood."
– Ella Taylor, LA Weekly

"One of the more intellectually engaging films of recent years."
– Dave Kehr, Daily News

"Rappaport's follow-up to ROCK HUDSON'S HOME MOVIES is an even bolder amalgam of free-associational film theory."
– J. Hoberman, Village Voice

"Dauntingly intelligent, endlessly inventive."
– Stuart Klawans, The Nation

"Rappaport's true subject isn't Jean Seberg, but film itself."
– Matt Zoller Seitz, New York Press

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Annual Film Quarterly Book Roundup, Part I

Blurred Boundaries

Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture

By Bill Nichols. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994. $29.95 cloth; $12.95 paper.

The main reason I find Bill Nichols' book so compelling is its dogged refusal to accept contemporary culture's seemingly pervasive denial of its historical and social realities. Saturated by the contemporary debates that have surrounded film and representation, imagistic inauthenticity and simulacrums, postmodern gamesmanship and the vicissitudes of subjectivity, I too have increasingly found myself talking about (or trying to talk about) the necessary return of historical content and social realities in the films and images that make up our culture. One common—and lamentable—way out is to simply wash one's hands of the complexity and difference of the present and find solace in the permanence of the world. But, as Nichols so convincingly demonstrates (despite some transhistorical leaps back to Buñuel and Eisenstein), the return of reality on film, videotape, and television today is not actually a return but a very complex renegotiation, sometimes intentional and sometimes not, of a social world as politically dense and pressing as ever before but now twisted and wrapped within technologies and ideologies that specialize in making those realities appear and disappear as ecstatic emergencies.

The book's premise itself is unspectacular: "Some have asserted that there is no such thing as documentary. . . . *Blurred Boundaries* makes a different assertion: not that boundaries and categories do not exist or that they are the work of taxonomic conquistadors . . . , but that the categories and boundaries surrounding documentary and reality, fact and fiction, defy hard and fast definition" (xiii). While this statement borders on the self-evident, Nichols hammers it out, historically refines it, and develops it to give it very specific contemporary contours. Organized around an assortment of essayistic chapters, this condensed but not overly dense book on the one hand discusses specific theoretical and textual issues regarding the documentary tradition in contemporary life; on the other hand, it frames and punctuates these discussions with collages of quotations and somewhat experimental (for an academic project) rhetorical moves. It begins with "an evocation" as a presentation and meditation on "embodied knowledge," and then moves through five chapters that test these opening positions against the Rodney King trial, "reality TV," the demands of ethnographic film in contemporary culture, documentary films and performance theory, and Eisenstein as a "geneological" source for contemporary documentary. The concluding chapter, "Please, All You Good and

Honest People: Film Form and Historical Consciousness," becomes an exceptionally cogent orchestration of the preceding motifs—lucid, precise, and unabashedly rhetorical in its commitment to historical knowledge.

Drawing on a wide range of theoretical terms and positions involving realism, gender, colonialization, and narrative, Nichols introduces several freshly coined critical terms and concepts aimed at grappling with the shifting problem of a critical relationship between lived reality, its representations, and the politics of subjectivity. Some of these terms and concepts appear incisive, others less so. On the one hand, a term like "magnitude" has, for me, more emotional energy than intellectual nuance as a description of the historical struggle involved in the tension between representation and the represented. On the other hand, Nichols' notion of an "oblique subject," found in so many contemporary documentary and fiction films, becomes a wonderfully suggestive linchpin for discussions of historical referents and representational praxis today—"the retrospective frame within which the past enters into a historical project aimed at a transformed future" (131).

There is a central core of films which appear as regular touchstones for Nichols' argument, including Christine Choy's *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, Bill Couturie's *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*, Gurinder Chadha's *I'm British But . . .* , Trinh T. Minh-ha's *First Name Viet Surname Nam*, and also forays into historical predecessors like Eisenstein's *Strike*. These examples anchor and counterpoint discussions of "reality TV" (the perverse characterization of shows from "Cops" and "America's Most Wanted" to network news broadcasts), ethnographic film, "performative" documentaries, and the return to "historical consciousness" in some troubling and provocative narrative films (such as *JFK*). This range of works indicates Nichols' recognition that, while some of the dominant blurred boundaries today are the well-rehearsed ones of high and popular culture or film and video, the ethical imperative of documentary film-making and the representation of reality will not (or cannot be allowed to) separate itself from historical and cultural continuities. Indeed I find the particularity of these different readings the most forceful moments in this book, for it is here that Nichols best demonstrates where the meaningless abstractions of history have given way to more concrete and localized dialogues that for all their crucial differences share a common ground. History has certainly not ended, but has perhaps only become more resistant to representation and more demanding of a self-conscious agency through which it can be understood and acted upon.

The rigorous contemporaneity of this book is, however, what will make it so important and pertinent to that larger audience of readers and viewers concerned with the frustrating mass of culture as we live it now. Framed by the "outrage" and "immediacy" of the Rodney King videotape and the "empty but embracing" coverage of the Gulf War, Nichols takes on events whose horrors have tragically become nonsensical bromides for all parts of the current ideological spectrum. The main issue here—and throughout the book—is not the presentation but the embodiment, reading, engagement, and narrativization of these images, and, as both those documents have demonstrated, textual analysis is simply not enough. In the best discussions I have read of those events, Nichols makes it clear that both are social "situations" spread from their production as sound bites to their recuperation as legal narratives or media poses. They are historically traumatic eruptions, like the Holocaust or the Vietnam War, whose paralyzing or empty emergencies are fully symptomatic of American culture today and the current crisis of historical realism.

For Nichols, the struggle for historical and social meaning involves the strenuous working of a cultural and academic terrain that keeps fading into the future. In this sense, the matter of this book is appropriately unsettling: marginal films few have seen set next to primetime images most Americans regularly watch, Fredric Jameson and the imaginaries of psychoanalytic theories border Dan Rather's lunatic self-staging within a deserted Iraqi bunker. Likewise, the book's manner, a collage style and organization "that strives to interfere with [the] traditional goals of realist representation in criticism" (xiii), might leave too much out: Who *exactly* are those historical viewers; How are they actually and factually different (in keeping with the very culturally divergent works under discussion); What are the institutional and social forces (both within and outside the United States) that impede and encourage them to "embody" different knowledges differently? (In an argument in which so much depends on the critical and imaginative work of specific audiences, readers, and viewers, I would like more differentiations of the kind Nichols so brilliantly provides when discussing the attorneys and jurors asked to make sense of the Rodney King videotape.) But then this is a book about gaps and the difficult historical and social filling of those gaps, and, in *Blurred Boundaries*, I am convinced that incompleteness finally represents an exceptionally knowledgeable and carefully considered effort to elicit the difficult necessity of taking responsibility for our experiences and history today.

TIMOTHY CORRIGAN

■ Timothy Corrigan teaches in the Department of English at Temple University.

Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture

The Silent Era

By Sumiko Higashi. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994. $40.00 cloth; $18.00 paper.

One of the many virtues of Sumiko Higashi's *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture: The Silent Era* is that it explores several gaps in our knowledge of DeMille's achievements. What was the king of kitsch up to in the Progressive Era, before he began specializing in consumerist comedies of remarriage, and how and why did that project change over time? What place did his films hold in American culture of the period?

Higashi, author of another book on DeMille and of a study of female stereotypes in the teens, sets out to answer these questions with a productive methodology. She considers many of DeMille's non-canonical films of the teens (analyzed closely in terms of narrative structure and visual style) and their production histories (derived from the DeMille archives) and relates them to the changing mores of the American middle and upper-middle class.

Higashi has organized her study around several aspects of the social history of the American middle class (in all its varieties). This group emerges most broadly as threatened by many profound and interconnected social changes at the turn of the century: industrialization and an increasing commodification of personal relationships; widespread immigration that only further alienated the urban resident; and the emergence, at the turn of the century, of the New Woman, who left the traditional household for a career, for college, or for the pleasures of flapperdom. The DeMille films reflect these changes, but they also embody the diverse strategies that cultural custodians deployed for coping with them.

For example, Higashi contrasts the cultural elites, who erected artistic hierarchies around Shakespeare, the symphony, and the city museum to exclude the urban masses (as Lawrence Levine described in *Highbrow/ Lowbrow*), with the early film magnates, who sought to dissolve aesthetic distinctions in order to develop the broadest possible audience base for the movies. This provides the setting for the emergence of DeMille's name as a trademark and the use of opera diva Geraldine Farrar to further the gilt by association Famous Players-Lasky films enjoyed in the teens. As Higashi points out, these two strategies appeal to highbrow culture for legitimation, but in effect produce middlebrow culture (as defined by Joan Shelley Rubin) for mass consumption.

Another strategy for reaffirming middle-class identity in the face of ethnic and social pluralism was the popularity of charades and pantomimes as an evening's entertainment in the home (as studied in Karen Haltunnen's *Confidence Men and Painted Women*). DeMille's *What's His Name* (1914), a quintessential example of the preachy melodramas the director favored, dramatizes the conflict between Protestant values of the old middle class (sincerity, hard work, and self-denial—as embodied in the husband Harvey) and consumerist and self-theatricalizing values of the new middle class (self-display, comfort, increased leisure, and refinement—as reflected in the housewife-turned-stage performer Nellie). Higashi's analysis of the film's visual style shows how DeMille used the celebrated Rembrandt or "contrasty" lighting in scenes (along with tendentious crosscutting and stylized mise-en-scène) to reaffirm the family's resilience.

Higashi further links the rituals of parlor games to the rise of department store displays and, in turn, to the consumerist ethos of DeMille's mid-teens melodramas, such as *The Cheat* (1915) and *The Golden Chance* (1916). These linkages show the logic by which DeMille's heroines changed from the sentimental types of the sermonizing early films to the frivolous conspicuous consumers who are sentimental but also "New Women." DeMille's visual style alters as well: lighting now functions more frequently to create a visual fetish of luxurious commodities than to highlight the moral hierarchies of the stories.

But DeMille's consumerism, with or without Orientalist seductiveness, was never consistent. Higashi sees in *The Heart of Nora Flynn* (a 1916 remake of *The Cheat* from the point of view of the rich woman's maid) a contradiction between a visual style highlighting the temptation of costly purchases and a narrational tone that upholds traditional values. Such insights also inform the chapters on DeMille's combination of different photographic traditions to portray immigrant slums (in the 1915 *Chimmie Fadden* films and *Kindling*), and on the practice of civic pageantry that underlies *Joan the Woman* (1916).

By the post-World War I period, when role-playing was more forcefully related to fashion, DeMille's films like *Don't Change Your Husband* (1919) and *Forbidden Fruit* (1921) emphasize "the importance of artifice rather than sincerity in sexual and marital relationships." The parlor room performance has now extended into the bedroom and the notoriously ornate bathroom, and the bedroom itself looks more like a department store. "Genteel concern with appearances as a sign of the character and breeding of the 'best people' has deteriorated into narcissistic self-absorption" (152). Higashi notes how DeMille's films contradicted the social realities of the

era: "Consumption was touted as the solution rather than the cause of marital discord" (164).

As this summary suggests, self-theatricalization as a middle-class phenomenon figures heavily in Higashi's analysis. Indeed, it brings out one of the rewards of her work. Characters constantly role-play in novels, poetry, the theater, and the cinema, but Higashi's emphasis on its historical specificity in the teens provides us with a sense of how resonant the portrayal of role-playing on screen could be. Compare DeMille's *The Golden Chance*—a Cinderella story about a lower-class housecleaner who "plays" at being the most beautiful woman in the world to help her employers entice a millionaire into a business deal—to Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* (1959).

Each successive chapter builds upon concepts and interpretations established earlier, a virtue of the book's topical and generally chronological organization. Higashi concludes with an assessment of DeMille's 1924 *The Ten Commandments* as a quintessentially self-contradictory antimodernist work that draws on traditional Protestant morality as well as an indulgence in Orientalist spectacle.

Throughout the book, Higashi sounds the appropriate notes about the films' unknown but assuredly varied reception, consults the trade press and even fan magazines to gauge possible meanings, and provides frame enlargements and correspondence (from the DeMille archive) to highlight her analyses. We learn that *The Cheat* was not a great box office success, and that it was executive Jesse Lasky, not the reluctant DeMille, who designed DeMille's shift into Jazz Age romantic comedies of remarriage; Higashi also takes due notice of DeMille collaborators, like set designer Wilfred Buckland and scriptwriter Jeannie Macpherson.

By situating DeMille's films in relation to different social histories of the era, Higashi makes admirably apparent how constructed historical interpretations are. One comes away with a sense of what DeMille's films might have meant to their audiences, depending on which historical interpretation one embraces; and since Higashi's own primary research focuses primarily on DeMille materials and not on social history itself, the prior interpretations by other historians (Levine, Rubin, Haltunnen, etc.) loom large in this work. One of the few weak points of the book is that Higashi's investment in these studies sometimes skews her analysis of the films.

For example, Higashi claims that a shot showing audiences arriving at the theater in *What's His Name*, as well as a sequence of shot/reverse shots of performance and audience reaction, means that "the filmgoing audience, identified with theatergoers, was being positioned to engage in a series of moral judgments concerning the nature of performance in a scenario about the sanctity of the family." Nothing in her description of the sequence justifies this reading; it sounds like a scene of theatergoers settling into their seats and watching. I had similar doubts about Higashi's claim that the Catholic bishop and inquisitors in *Joan the Woman* are hooded to resemble the Ku Klux Klan.

My second and much stronger objection is that Higashi has written this book in an extremely dense, convoluted style that renders the extremely abstract arguments about social history unnecessarily difficult to follow. Higashi has pitched the book to American Studies scholars, a strategy that unfortunately will limit its readership.

Nonetheless, Higashi's attention to class, gender, and racial hierarchies in middle-class culture as they relate to DeMille's work is distinctive and exemplary. The first major scholarly study of one of the most socially significant directors, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture* is a significant and insightful contribution to American film history.

MATTHEW BERNSTEIN

■ Matthew Bernstein is the author of *Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent*. [See review on p. 61. Ed.]

Directed by Dorothy Arzner

By Judith Mayne. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994. $29.95 cloth; $15.95 paper.

For anyone involved in "women and film" studies, the figure of Dorothy Arzner has been an alluring one. Arzner, the sole woman directing in 1930s and early 1940s classic Hollywood, survived into talkies when all other women directors (and producers) of early silents disappeared; her career ended in 1943 only when she herself decided to leave the industry. But given this heroic data, her films were vaguely disappointing when one first sought them out—they often seemed stiff, shaky, and awkwardly timed. (Why is it that after all these years no one is willing to raise questions about the quality of her work? Mayne to her credit makes a gesture in that direction, but only a vague one.) However, with repeated viewings and despite their flaws, such films as *Christopher Strong* and *Dance, Girl, Dance* have come to occupy an important place in the cinematic firmament. So for many, this first full-length study of Arzner, writ-

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ten by a well-known and respected feminist film scholar, was eagerly awaited.

There's a special pleasure in finding Judith Mayne writing with clarity and without jargon, all while explicitly questioning the feminist theoretical tradition in which she has always written. She notes that as much of the important 70s writing on Arzner came from those outside that tradition as within it, a welcome if belated recognition of the obvious. This material deserves to go beyond the usual small circle of academic initiates, and Mayne's attempt to reach a wider audience through an all-purpose prose than *The Woman at the Keyhole* could, in itself suggests a salutary new perspective.

Mayne rightly builds her study on the importance of female relationships both for Arzner's life and in her films. In tracing the progression of the director's career, she has turned up some interesting new information. She reports, for example, that though director James Cruze is always cited as Arzner's mentor, her first strong influence was a flamboyant Russian lesbian producer/actress, Alla Nazimova. Mayne sees Nazimova serving for Arzner "as an early example of a woman who insisted on creative autonomy and control in her work." She was also an instance (another was the cutter Nan Heron, who taught Arzner editing) of the nurturing relations with women that marked Arzner's career in Hollywood.

That Arzner was a lesbian comes as no surprise. But Mayne's explicit focus on that sexual identity gives a fuller, clearer sense of Arzner's life and work. Though clearly not a biography, the book draws attention to the director's personal life (although little that is new about her family origins and nothing of her ethnicity is explained). One of the most affecting things about this book is that Mayne allows her own personal and passionate response to Arzner to emerge. She was "thrilled" by evidence of Arzner's 40-year relationship with the dancer Michelle Morgan and "thrilled" again when she came upon a photo of their home with Arzner's handwritten caption that the two women shared it. Though Hitchcock's long marriage to Alma Reville or Jane Campion's sex life may be equally pertinent in understanding their respective film oeuvres, it feels especially apt to include this material about Arzner.

Most of us who have studied Arzner's films believed she was a lesbian both from these fascinating photos Mayne uses so well here, and from the films themselves. Though noone could know for sure without doing extensive research (and even in this dedicated study, Mayne cannot speak with total certainty), those photos of Arzner looking "butch" (in Mayne's word), gazing deeply at beautiful actresses in their full feminine regalia, *are* as intriguing as Mayne finds them. It is one of the virtues of this book that Mayne names them as such, that she sees the photos as an aspect of Arzner almost as worthy of attention as the films themselves: not only that Arzner flaunted a butch persona in a world where homosexuality was largely in the closet, but what that might signify.

Mayne argues convincingly that it was Arzner's gender ambiguity which gave her the flexibility to survive in Hollywood. She speaks of Arzner's butch photo images as

> provocative in the sense that these images of Dorothy challenge any easy fit among sex, gender, and sexuality; they are troubling in that they suggest masculinity, yet problematize it. This simultaneous quotation and subversion of masculinity is the essence of butch style.

Arzner's photos thrill us, she feels, with "the possibilities of crossing boundaries between supposedly opposite terms: male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual"—and with the "liberating potential" Arzner represented. Her survival doubtless had other sources as well: in my own view, the lucky timing of having done her apprenticeship at the very end of the silent period made it easier for her to adapt to new technological changes than it was for those who had spent long careers in the silent cinema. Or perhaps Arzner also survived through personal qualities of flexibility, passion, strength, and intelligence—apart from gender. Still, Mayne is surely right that because Arzner "was not a 'woman' in any one-dimensional" or conventional way, she had an advantage among the men with whom she worked, an advantage that a heterosexual woman director in those years would not have had.

Mayne's analyses of individual films contain no surprises or leaps of unexpected insight, but they are solid and reliable. She notes that none of the romances in Arzner's films are "straight," but rather unconventional and usually ironic, and that the ultimate focus is on woman/woman relationships. (On this point, however, anybody who has written incisively on Arzner has already agreed.) Of *Christopher Strong*, she points out that the really powerful relations are less those between the heterosexual couples than the one between Cynthia and Lady Strong, who Mayne sees (as have others) as far more complex than her role as wronged wife requires. Of *Dance, Girl, Dance*, she notes the special resonance of dancing for Arzner, given the director's relationship with dancer and dance-troupe head Michelle Morgan. Mayne's view that the dance company head in *Dance, Girl, Dance* dies because she goes against her own identity in donning a frilly hat stretches credibility but is intriguing. Of Judy's confronting the audience in *Dance*, Mayne notes shifts in decades of feminist theory. In place of the 70s preoccupation with challenging the male

gaze, she sees the film as "remind[ing] us, always, that there are women on both sides of the stage, and that they take pleasure in looking at each other." This is an attractive rendering, though again somehow too familiar, too filled with the echoes of other people's earlier work. All in all, Mayne's study does not break much new ground. But it is suggestive and useful, and provides some fresh insight into Arzner's work.

BARBARA QUART

■ Barbara Quart is the author of *Women Directors: The Emergence of a New Cinema* (Praeger, 1988).

Hollywood in the Information Age

Beyond the Silver Screen

By Janet Wasko. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994. $40.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

The title of Janet Wasko's engrossing examination of current Hollywood practices is rather intriguing given her thesis: Despite the constant public discussion of such topics as the information superhighway and cyberspace, we are not so much in an information age as we are in an era of expanding entertainment culture. The "information societies" that have supposedly emerged in the past generation do not embody the sweeping changes attributed to them; instead, the incorporation of information technologies within previous entertainment media has turned entertainment (or "infotainment," as it has been called) into a serious business. Economics and culture are thus the two foci of Wasko's study, which she executes within a clear and coherent format featuring quite understandable language, even when she ventures into the techno-talk of trade publications. The integrity of her research is also impressive, covering a wide range of industry reports, legal documents, and popular press articles.

According to Wasko, Hollywood has grown wise and rich since its silver screen days to become *the* culture industry of the world. She demonstrates this development by tracing Hollywood's historical relationship with new media technologies, from sound film and radio to computers, concluding that the film industry has always found a way to capitalize on new technology, even if it didn't utilize the innovations directly. Wasko briefly takes to task some of the other film scholars (e.g., Comolli, Bordwell, Staiger) whose work is relevant to these issues, offering a corrective to those typical film histories that have been "insular and self-contained, with little regard to interrelationships between media or media and social content" (18). Unlike many of those histories, however, Wasko's shows little interest in methodological or academic arguments, and Wasko makes herself vulnerable to scholarly criticism since specific historiographic issues are unresolved in her approach. She describes the broad theories and methods she follows, but she does not fully describe nor justify the system she uses.

Wasko proceeds with a discussion of technical transformations in film production, pointing out that although film-making adopts new technologies to expand its capabilities, its practitioners have a certain conservative fear of corrupting or abandoning the art of film. This fear is somewhat legitimized in Wasko's investigation of the major Hollywood studios, which have become less concerned with movies and more invested in media expansion. In looking at particular studios, Wasko indicates the media consolidation—and subsequent monopolization—that has been developing (despite the myth that more and newer media are breeding increased public access and corporate competition). The massive amounts of money in infotainment commerce do not lead to diversity but to conglomeration, with more profits directed to fewer sources. Wasko describes how the many media mergers of the past generation have brought us back to vertical integrations that were originally outlawed 50 years ago by the Paramount decrees; today, the mergers result in huge media companies that perceive themselves as "*diversified* conglomerates."

The ever-expanding television industry and the Hollywood companies' increasing interrelation with electronic media are further evidence in Wasko's argument. There are now more channels offering more shows from more locations, but is this development actually increasing the quality or diversity of media? Wasko thinks not, and she points to the cultural risk of creating and replacing media at such a rapid rate that we do not realize the potential of what we are offered. Our understanding of the complicated industrial and financial conditions of these developments is aided by Wasko's generous use of charts and tables, as well as her examination of political, legal, and economic changes that effected the media's current state.

The irony of the film purist's fear is that movies, that is feature-length narrative films, have remained the dominant media staple in Hollywood despite the proliferation of alternative forms. In her ample chapter on the home video revolution, Wasko considers the winding history of video through its technology and its social

gaze, she sees the film as "remind[ing] us, always, that there are women on both sides of the stage, and that they take pleasure in looking at each other." This is an attractive rendering, though again somehow too familiar, too filled with the echoes of other people's earlier work. All in all, Mayne's study does not break much new ground. But it is suggestive and useful, and provides some fresh insight into Arzner's work.

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implications, concluding that the home video market, as well as pay television, have remained movie media. Again, Wasko builds her polemic about the cultural ironies of video expansion, expressing a disappointment that speaks to the hegemony of capitalism: "Indeed, the truly *revolutionary* characteristics of home video—control over the creation and retransmission of information and cultural creation—has been overshadowed by the acceptance of the technology as a *natural* development of the commodified form of information and entertainment and consequently, control of home video's development has remained in the hands of those corporations which previously dominated these activities" (169).

Wasko goes on to address the changing conditions of theatrical film exhibition, which has not become the wasteland that some predicted when first TVs and then VCRs were introduced. Movie theaters have struggled and survived, largely by packing more screens into smaller areas, and even though their corporate media ownership is further proof of the vertical integration that has helped sustain them. Wasko moves on to the commercialization of U.S. films (as we see in product placements, theater and video ads, or tie-ins), a topic which she uses to further advance her argument about the commodification of culture. In this argument she mentions, but does not explore, the considerable changes that have taken place in the *production* practices of studio films since they have become, in her estimation, more commercialized than ever before.

In another chapter, Wasko discusses the international media market, which she sees being more and more influenced by Hollywood products. However, she also points out how little research has been generated to positively identify the specific effects of Hollywood on the complex international economy. Perhaps this is why she minimizes an open opportunity to apply her cultural concerns to these international issues, wherein her commodification critique is otherwise most relevant.

Wasko concludes with some significant claims, most notably, that political deregulation and globalization have been as important to Hollywood as technological developments, and that in this "information age" there has been as much continuity in media commodities and commerce as there has been change. She also admits that there is no longer a *film* industry per se—call it a part of the media industry or lump it all together as audio/visual business, but film is only a component, and quite possibly on the way out. Nonetheless, Hollywood will persist, even if film and theaters become extinct; the entrenchment of Hollywood practice and ideology in media has become too deep and dynamic to lessen its dominance any time soon.

The book ends with the culture issue most clearly on Wasko's mind, as she argues that "a form of *cultural synergy* has coincided with the corporate synergy stressed by the megacorporations which produce and distribute cultural products" (252), a phenomenon which has resulted in our contemporary experience of "recycled culture." In other works, notions of postmodernism are raised to theorize about this condition, but Wasko states it plainly. There are indeed dilemmas at hand in the increasing authority of Hollywood to define and regulate culture, and Wasko certainly reveals the mechanisms of that regulation, yet her account of the potential *dangers* posed by Hollywood, an institution that seems to offer nothing short of constant pleasure and profit, is ultimately not as threatening as she may have intended. Fortunately, the success of Wasko's sensible and comprehensive analysis does not hinge on how seriously we take her warnings.

TIMOTHY SHARY

■ Timothy Shary is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts.

Japanese Classical Theater in Films

By Keiko I. McDonald. Cranbury, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994. $48.50.

Although links between the stage and the screen in the Western world have often been examined, rarely has this been the central focus of a work dealing with Asian cinema. Only the occasional conference panel or a chapter in a larger anthology ever touches on the debt of certain Japanese films to the *kabuki* or *no* theaters. Keiko McDonald's *Japanese Classical Theater in Films* fills this gap with a comprehensive volume that considers the close relationship between film and theater in Japan.

Japanese Classical Theater in Films is divided into two relatively self-contained parts. McDonald begins with a detailed historical analysis and goes on to examine specific films with close theatrical antecedents. While some of the films discussed in the second section are part of the usual canon, a few are delightful surprises—the result of McDonald's careful research and extensive knowledge of the subject.

McDonald analyzes the films in terms of narrative structure, characterization, and visual import (cinematography, setting, costume) through "reaching back" to examples from such traditional theatrical forms as *no*,

implications, concluding that the home video market, as well as pay television, have remained movie media. Again, Wasko builds her polemic about the cultural ironies of video expansion, expressing a disappointment that speaks to the hegemony of capitalism: "Indeed, the truly *revolutionary* characteristics of home video—control over the creation and retransmission of information and cultural creation—has been overshadowed by the acceptance of the technology as a *natural* development of the commodified form of information and entertainment and consequently, control of home video's development has remained in the hands of those corporations which previously dominated these activities" (169).

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kabuki, *bunraku* (the puppet theater), and *kyogen* (a comic form). She stresses the highly presentational nature of the classical Japanese theater, comparing it to the Elizabethan public playhouse and vaudeville, and contrasting it to what she terms "transparent realism" (32).

Film historian and critic Tadao Sato has pointed out that one of the paradoxes of the early Japanese cinema was that "it was a new means of expression, but what it expressed was old" (7). Along with insights from Sato, McDonald cites writings by Susan Sontag and Noël Carroll, among others, to provide what she terms an "eclectic and versatile" critical framework (13).

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McDonald notes how the "problem-crisis-resolution" axis of *sewamono* (domestic) drama carries over to many of the *jidai-geki* films, and she takes care to point out how the film directors transform the original plays in ways that reveal new ideological and philosophical interpretations. But she also reminds the reader that the tragic mode is not the only cinematic borrowing from the classical theater. She points to the sense of parody in Kurosawa's *The Men Who Tread on the Tiger's Tail* (1945) as a synthesis of high and low modes of presentation, with its sense of "double irony" in the porter's role as both fool and hero. In Sadao Yamanaka's *Soshun Kochiyama* (1936), she notes the director's playful look at the life of the common person and, in Ichikawa's *An Actor's Revenge* (1963), she skillfully elaborates on the film's satirical treatment of the *kabuki* theater's formalistic idealization of the *onnagata* (female impersonator).

Music plays a crucial role in traditional Japanese theater, and McDonald discusses both musical and acoustic effects in films derived from theatrical antecedents. This is refreshing because many film scholars fail to recognize the operatic nature of traditional Asian theater, in which music, movement, costume, and spoken words are intrinsically connected.

McDonald began this investigation of the connection between Japanese cinema and theater in Japan in her earlier writings. Note her discussion in *Cinema East* of Shinoda's *kurogo* (black-hooded attendants) and rotating screens in *Double Suicide* (1969), and her fascinating comparison in *Mizoguchi* of the boat scene in *The Crucified Lovers* (1954) to the *merihari* (sudden halt) device in *kabuki*. In *Japanese Classical Theater in Film*, McDonald takes her prior analyses one step further.

Following this book by McDonald, another welcome addition would be a volume focusing on the effect of the 20th-century theater on film. McDonald points to this possible extension of her current work in writing:

> With the arrival of realism in Japanese film history, the *jidaigeki* began to break free of classical theater in both style and subject matter. Having taken its cues from the stage, cinema has developed as a kind of foster child learning the rudiments of grammar from a mother art that had very definite notions about itself. Inevitably, however, cinema began to grow up and change in response to other influences (50).

The notes and bibliography in *Japanese Classical Theater in Film* are extensive, providing sources for further reading both in English and in Japanese. No doubt because of faulty editing, this book is marred by rather glaring mistakes in spelling and grammar. It could well be used as a textbook in courses about Asian cinema and theater, or about theater and film in general. Many (but not all) of the films discussed in Part 2 are available in 16mm format from U.S. distributors. As McDonald indicates in the title of her first chapter, there is an "embarrassment of riches" on this topic.

LINDA C. EHRLICH

■ Linda C. Ehrlich is an Associate Professor of Japanese and Cinema at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Melodrama

Stage, Picture, Screen

Edited by Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1994. $49.95 cloth; $23.95 paper.

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specific anthologies rarely cohere effectively, usually because of an eclectic amalgam of approaches and essays of widely divergent quality. This reservation compounded when I read that the anthology emerged from a conference (the 1992 Melodrama Conference held at the British Film Institute in London)—attempts to capture the "flavor" of a conference usually leave a bad taste in one's mouth.

However, Bratton, Cook, and Gledhill have produced a useful, coherent, and highly readable anthology. The book proceeds from two founding assumptions about how to develop melodrama studies as a discipline. First, the insular nature of each academic discipline's approach toward melodrama has left the field scattered and talking at cross purposes. Second, the field's obsession with Hollywood melodramas (particularly 1950s domestic melodramas in the Sirkian vein) has skewed our understanding of melodrama toward modernist excess and away from considerations of the affective potential of melodrama. *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen* rigorously grapples with both of these limitations.

Very rarely have the insights of different fields—theater studies, film studies, literary studies, history, art history—been comparatively examined in order to synthetically understand melodrama as a modern mode of expression operating in different forms, historical and cultural conditions, and registers. The essays in the anthology self-consciously attempt to connect insights made in one field to melodrama texts in a number of media. For example, David Grimstead studies the 19th-century American vigilante chronicles, and then connects them to the melodramatic rhetoric of our current motley crew of conservative politicians. Richard Maltby analyzes *Upton Sinclair Presents William Fox* as a radical melodrama exposing American anti-Semitism, and then forges connections to the melodramatic and hysterical rhetoric of the Progressive reformers in the wake of the white slavery panic of 1909.

The strength of such an interdisciplinary approach is that it widens the definitions of what constitutes a melodramatic text. This insight into textual fluidity serves to topple an obsessive attention to the 1950s Hollywood melodrama (at least in film studies) as the definitional test case for melodrama. The anthology presents a number of interesting parameters for comparatively assessing the historical breadth of the melodramatic text. Peter Brooks and Caryl Flinn, in very different ways, explore the melodramatics of psychoanalysis. Daniel Gerould discusses the "paratheatrical activities" of Maxime Lisbonne, an exiled Communard who returned to Paris to open restaurants in which he performed ceremonies reenacting the torture, imprisonment, and exile of members of the 1871 Commune.

Beyond such textual expansions, the anthology offers a number of frameworks for rethinking the important issues surrounding melodrama, first by critiquing the exclusive status excess has previously held in explorations of the melodramatic text. Many of the essays work to rethink melodramas whose formal principles do not necessarily hinge upon excess. Jane Shattuc's exploration of *The Color Purple* takes the melodrama's direct emotional effect on viewers seriously, exposing excess as a race and class privilege. Chuck Kleinhans' exploration of the independent feature, *Bless Their Little Hearts*, seeks to explain the political power of realist melodrama, a form that, according to a modernist criticism grounded in excess, is politically impotent.

Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen also attempts to expand considerations of melodrama into other cultural contexts, although much more work on its status and function in other national cultures remains to be done. The anthology's best essay in this regard is Nick Browne's exploration of *Hibiscus Town*, a Chinese political melodrama. Browne connects Chinese cinema and melodrama by exploring how both textual forms are obsessed with subjectivity and the relationship between the self and the social order. Other essays in the anthology explore melodrama in French culture, in Regency Britain, and in the Soviet Union. However, no essays explore the melodramatic imagination in Third World cultures. While not surprising, one would think that the prolific Indian film industry, for example, with its strong melodramatic tradition, would be a ripe site for analysis. The editors are aware of this gap in the anthology, and they effectively address it: "At the conference itself the need was signalled for a more determined widening of horizons and proactive engagement with the different modes of the melodramatic wherever it works through the engagement with modernity of decolonialising culture" (8).

Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen is organized into four major sections: "Debates," "Transformations," "Revisions," and "Politics." Each section begins with a keynote essay by a major figure in the field of melodrama studies. The remaining contributions grapple with the theoretical issues raised by the section's keynote essay. "Debates" begins with Peter Brooks' "Melodrama, Body, Revolution," wherein he revises his seminal observations made in *The Melodramatic Imagination*. Still asserting melodrama's roots in the French Revolution, Brooks complicates this by observing that melodrama's "aesthetics of embodiment" is tied to the French Revolution's initiation of modernity's control and punishment of the human body. The remainder of the essays in the section "appreciatively revise" (in Janet Staiger's eloquent phrase) the ways in which *The Melodramatic Imagination* has defined melodrama studies.

Simon Shepherd's essay argues that analyzing the melodramas of Regency London yields a different vision of the mode than does Brooks' attention to the French Revolution. Jacky Bratton claims that Brooks overlooks the important comedic components of melodrama. Tom Gunning asserts that Brooks is wrong to see melodrama after the 1830s as "decadent"; instead, the turn-of-the-century Grand Guignol of Andre de Lorde is the logical extension of the modern world's loss of moral order.

"Transformations," the book's second section, and clearly its weakest, presents essays whose purpose is to track the melodramatic imagination as it travels across historical periods. While the essays of this section are provocative, they do not convincingly connect their historical sites, and they bog down in telling us that melodrama is constantly changing, without ever analyzing the cultural specifics of these changes and why they are significant.

The final essay of the section, Caryl Flinn's "Music and the Melodramatic Past of New German Cinema," seems out of place. While Flinn's essay suffers from a certain historical weakness—she merely glosses over the relationship between the Hollywood melodrama and the New German Cinema—the essay makes a major theoretical contribution to our understanding of melodrama. Flinn proposes that we replace Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's conversion hysteria model of melodrama with one grounded in melancholia. Such a replacement eliminates the misogyny implied by the hysteria model, and produces a much more historical vision of melodrama, as melancholia involves coming to terms with the past.

The third section, "Revisions," continues Flinn's defense of melodrama as a deeply historical genre with Laura Mulvey's "It Will Be a Magnificent Obsession." Mulvey argues that melodrama offers the history of the present, a radical idea which counters trite attacks on the genre as ahistorical and escapist. The remaining essays in the section further Mulvey's contention by identifying the political debates circulating in melodramas from a variety of historical and cultural locations. Barbara Klinger examines the polysemy of the "adult film," a studio-defined genre of the 1950s which worked to negotiate the conflicting liberal and conservative discourses toward sexuality in postwar America. Jane Shattuc's analysis of *The Color Purple* argues for melodrama's "dual hermeneutic"—its simultaneous production of both liberatory (our identification with Celie) and oppressive (our vilification of Mister) reactions to the text. Chuck Kleinhans' analysis of *Bless Their Little Hearts* directly reinforces Mulvey's central contention. Kleinhans argues that artists choose the denigrated realist melodrama specifically because of the mode's "power of recognition," its ability to gain a profound psychological resonance in the audience of its own time (163). Nick Browne argues that analyzing *Hibiscus Town* gives us the opportunity to rethink the principles of our ideological criticism, since we are comfortable critiquing a film's capitalist logic, but do not have the tools for interrogating the Chinese political melodrama's critique of the totalitarian Socialist state.

The anthology concludes with "Politics." Daniel Gerould explores a subgenre of the theatrical melodrama which he labels "revolutionary melodrama." He argues that after each revolution in France melodrama became the principle artistic form of revolutionary documentation. Gerould uses this to explain why melodrama was so popular in the Soviet Union immediately after the Revolution of 1917. But perhaps the most unique and interesting essay in the entire anthology is David Grimstead's analysis of the 19th-century American vigilante chronicles. Grimstead compares these "political melodramas" to the more traditional "theatrical melodramas," and argues that while the melodrama is a quasi-Marxist form because the poor are virtuous and the rich are evil, the conservative vigilante chronicles serve to vilify the poor as rabble and support the ruling interests. The anthology concludes with Jane Gaines' essay on *Within Our Gates*, a recently discovered Oscar Micheaux film. Gaines claims that Micheaux is an important film-maker to study because his melodramas fit neither the mold of the classical cinema nor the modernist counter-cinema. In a provocative formulation, Gaines argues that Micheaux's parallel development to mainstream film-makers like D.W. Griffith is best understood as Micheaux developing a film grammar that "transform[s] the existing without changing it" (242).

The strength of *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen* as an anthology is the way in which the various essays defend the significance of melodrama by arguing similar points while exploring different historical sites. For example, many of the essayists argue against melodrama's traditional marginalization by academic criticism. A number of essays convincingly claim that melodrama's radical politics is responsible for this marginalization. Jane Gaines begins tentatively: "I suspect that the swift turn of events that equalizes the unequal and the symmetrical plot development which evens scores may only be absurd and nonsensical to those in power" (237). If this critique of academic discourse as classist does not entirely convince, it is revisited in a completely different context in David Grimstead's analysis of the comparative cultural status of the theatrical melodrama and the vigilante chronicles. The theatrical melodrama, argues Grimstead is seen as vulgar and duplicitous, while academic historians have accepted and repeated the vigilante stories as truth. Grimstead concludes: "One wonders how much the class concern of melodramatic plays and the class complacency of vigilante chronicles may

have contributed to their very different reputations" (209). As if there were any doubt as to the political motivations of the critical abuse of melodrama, Jane Shattuc's essay nails the coffin shut. Shattuc concludes: "[U]ntil we break the instrumental logic of reading all ideology as false consciousness and the reproduction of self-serving class and racially bound concepts such as excess, we limit some of the most powerful examples of political resistance and communal beliefs" (154). It is this overlapping of vital insights into melodrama that makes *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen* one of the most coherent, useful, and convincing genre anthologies I have ever read.

WALTER METZ

■ Walter Metz is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin.

Overtones and Undertones

Reading Film Music

By Royal S. Brown. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994. $50.00 cloth; $20.00 paper.

Film Music

Fundamentals of the Language

By Randall Meyers. Oslo, Norway: ANG. Nkr. 260.

A spate of new books on film music in the last year or two reflects growing interest in the power and artistry of the music behind the images. Until a decade ago—and in subtler ways still today—film music studies have tended to be plagued by a division between film scholars and music scholars. Royal Brown's work appeals to both sides of this cantankerous divide in its attentiveness both to details of musical form and to film narrative. *Overtones and Undertones* straddles yet another divide, between academia and the world outside. Brown's unusually extensive familiarity with a huge range of film scores, because of his dual experience as a professor and a serious film music reviewer, brings a range to his study that is lacking in the tidier academic volumes that preceded his book. My own *Unheard Melodies* (1987), Kathryn Kalinaks's *Settling the Score* (1992), and Caryl Flinn's *Strains of Utopia* (1992) all concentrated to various extents on theoretical concerns about music and film narrative, and each examined relatively few films. While these studies boast greater overall coherence, Brown's rambling and enthusiastic tome covers more ground, and complements the others well.

Brown's subject is, as he puts it, the interaction between music and film. Since he favors artistically notable interactions, this is primarily a book on aesthetics, rather than a historical or cultural study. He develops a number of threads: music, since nonrepresentational, helps to counterbalance the cinema's "privilege of the iconic"; and normally nonspecific in its affect, music takes on specific emotions once attached to visual narrative. He discusses musical properties of film music in comparison to concert music, silent film music in comparison to sound scores, and key moments and trends in the evolution of film music.

Readers unfamiliar with Brown's previous essays on Bernard Herrmann's scores for Hitchcock and on the music of Godard's films can find extended treatments of both here, as well as detailed analyses of scores from *Alexander Nevsky* through *Laura*, *The Sea Hawk*, and *Double Indemnity* to *Liquid Sky* and *The Hunger*. Brown is nothing if not eclectic, although like most scholars he still refuses to cross the line and acknowledge a predominant form of film music since the late 1980s, the pop compilation score. The book's final 70 pages contain excellent, well-informed interviews of eight composers, from Rozsa and Raksin to Barry and Shore.

The book need more editing than it received at California—many sentences have far more asides than this one—and such words as "paradigmaticizing" (48), "permanentization" (71), and "hyperexpletive" (111) distress the reader with regularity. The digressive style often distracts, and sometimes Brown uses a single word to mean too many things. Early chapters labor through thickets of dropped names and concepts, many explained only in great haste. Despite these shortcomings, Brown provides valuable insights along the way, especially when he is free to explore individual cases of how film music works.

The first chapter illustrates both the *grandeur* and *décadence* of Brown's approach. He argues first that music "narrativizes" cinema, steering the film experience away from the strict "screen reality" of the images and toward story. In fact, he continues, music "mythifies" films, or draws the film images in the direction of myth; in a number of ways, it functions to transcend the specificity of the represented onscreen moment. Think of the end of Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*; Lincoln walks up a hill, and we hear music whose effect is to impose a transhistorical grandeur to Lincoln's ascent. The "hill" he's climbing becomes a metonym for his difficult destiny as President.

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Brown then does a second take on the meaning of myth, calling "cultural myth" the kind that closes off meaning to a particular set of ideological inflections. In my *Young Mr. Lincoln* example, Lincoln's ascent is accompanied specifically by the "Battle Hymn of the Republic"; this choice of music restricts readings of the scene to patriotic, God-on-our-side connotations. The double use of the term "myth" is hurriedly bridged by a couple of quotes from Barthes. Then the chapter hauls in yet a third characterization, Nietzsche's "tragic myth." All we learn about this term comes in a condensed quote from Nietzsche (invoking Schopenhauer, mentions Brown in a throwaway phrase) about Dionysian knowledge in symbols. Before we know it, we wind up in an analysis of *Psycho* based on tragic myth: "With the exploits of an American criminal who indulged in what might best be called 'postmodern' (i.e., with no cultural payback) Dionysian ritual as its springboard, *Psycho* concludes as an all but perfect Dionysian tragedy" (33).

Brown's effusiveness sometimes leads to muddles, but often to penetrating insight. Most thought-provoking is the chapter on postmodernism. We disagree on the usefulness of the term itself: *Terminator* and *Die Hard* are just as "postmodern" as are movies by Beineix and other independents, which are his focus here. Nevertheless, Brown convincingly identifies a distinct kind of contemporary film score, one in which music seems to become an "image" itself, functioning as a "parallel universe" to the story rather than illuminating it in the manner of the classical score. To be sure, one may find examples of isolated techniques and effects of this kind in scores of decades past. But in seeing/hearing *Heavenly Creatures*—to take an example that has appeared since the publication of *Overtones and Undertones*—one senses that the focused deployment of music for irony and excess—toppling the hierarchy of subjectivity, confusing high and low, diegetic and nondiegetic—has resulted in an entirely new paradigm of film/music interaction. Brown's examination of several films of this nature has brought the paradigm to light.

Randall Meyers, an American composer who lives in Europe, has geared his book to appeal to aspiring film composers and directors, urging them to consider more than the usual possibilities for music in movies. *Film Music* introduces readers to principles of music and compositional strategies of film music through well-chosen examples from key film scores. It includes interviews with four artists: Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, Danish documentarist Jorgen Leth, American sound designer Walter Murch, and Italian composer Nicola Piovani. The good news is that Meyers' choice of films is not firmly tied to Hollywood (he shares this orientation with the more thorough Michel Chion, whose brilliant *La Musique au cinéma* appeared in 1995). *Film Music* is concise and full of well-explained ideas. The bad news is that the book seems unaware of the literature on film music in Europe and the U.S. since about 1975.

Meyers clearly states his biases about film: "The cinematic art today, in general, suffers from fossilization and stagnation largely [because] the main creative forces behind films are often culturally and technically poorly equipped for the task of injecting this young yet already decrepit art form with the life-force it so direly needs" (62). His observations on music for film genres provide little beyond Fred Karlin's excellent book *Listening to Movies* (Schirmer, 1994). A sound designer as well as composer, he includes a chapter on artful uses of film sound, though again, Michel Chion also outdid Meyers in *Audio-Vision* and other volumes on the subject. These overlaps are unfortunate, for Meyers' work is crisp and nicely organized. One wonders what he would have accomplished had he been better informed on the existing literature.

CLAUDIA GORBMAN

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Perspectives on Akira Kurosawa

Edited by James Goodwin. New York: G. K. Hall, 1994. $50.00.

This informative anthology on Akira Kurosawa gathers together previously published material (reviews, essays, and interviews) and newly commissioned writings and translations from 40 critics, filmmakers, and Kurosawa scholars. Intended for specialists and general readers alike, it covers most of the 30 films that Kurosawa has directed in his distinguished 50-year career. The volume is divided into three main sections: "Film Artists on Kurosawa," "Kurosawa on Kurosawa," and "Film Critics on Kurosawa." In his excellent introduction, James Goodwin not only synopsizes each selection in the volume but locates it in the history of Kurosawa criticism, Japanese film studies, or both. This is extremely useful, but it might have been even more helpful if Goodwin had provided a condensed overview of Kurosawa's career in the first few pages of the introduction.

The first two sections establish the major themes of Kurosawa criticism: his bold visual style; his adaptations of Shakespearean and Russian classics; his debt to John Ford; his social and political concerns; his work in the

Brown then does a second take on the meaning of myth, calling "cultural myth" the kind that closes off meaning to a particular set of ideological inflections. In my *Young Mr. Lincoln* example, Lincoln's ascent is accompanied specifically by the "Battle Hymn of the Republic"; this choice of music restricts readings of the scene to patriotic, God-on-our-side connotations. The double use of the term "myth" is hurriedly bridged by a couple of quotes from Barthes. Then the chapter hauls in yet a third characterization, Nietzsche's "tragic myth." All we learn about this term comes in a condensed quote from Nietzsche (invoking Schopenhauer, mentions Brown in a throwaway phrase) about Dionysian knowledge in symbols. Before we know it, we wind up in an analysis of *Psycho* based on tragic myth: "With the exploits of an American criminal who indulged in what might best be called 'postmodern' (i.e., with no cultural payback) Dionysian ritual as its springboard, *Psycho* concludes as an all but perfect Dionysian tragedy" (33).

Brown's effusiveness sometimes leads to muddles, but often to penetrating insight. Most thought-provoking is the chapter on postmodernism. We disagree on the usefulness of the term itself: *Terminator* and *Die Hard* are just as "postmodern" as are movies by Beineix and other independents, which are his focus here. Nevertheless, Brown convincingly identifies a distinct kind of contemporary film score, one in which music seems to become an "image" itself, functioning as a "parallel universe" to the story rather than illuminating it in the manner of the classical score. To be sure, one may find examples of isolated techniques and effects of this kind in scores of decades past. But in seeing/hearing *Heavenly Creatures*—to take an example that has appeared since the publication of *Overtones and Undertones*—one senses that the focused deployment of music for irony and excess—toppling the hierarchy of subjectivity, confusing high and low, diegetic and nondiegetic—has resulted in an entirely new paradigm of film/music interaction. Brown's examination of several films of this nature has brought the paradigm to light.

Randall Meyers, an American composer who lives in Europe, has geared his book to appeal to aspiring film composers and directors, urging them to consider more than the usual possibilities for music in movies. *Film Music* introduces readers to principles of music and compositional strategies of film music through well-chosen examples from key film scores. It includes interviews with four artists: Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, Danish documentarist Jorgen Leth, American sound designer Walter Murch, and Italian composer Nicola Piovani. The good news is that Meyers' choice of films is not firmly tied to Hollywood (he shares this orientation with the more thorough Michel Chion, whose brilliant *La Musique au cinéma* appeared in 1995). *Film Music* is concise and full of well-explained ideas. The bad news is that the book seems unaware of the literature on film music in Europe and the U.S. since about 1975.

Meyers clearly states his biases about film: "The cinematic art today, in general, suffers from fossilization and stagnation largely [because] the main creative forces behind films are often culturally and technically poorly equipped for the task of injecting this young yet already decrepit art form with the life-force it so direly needs" (62). His observations on music for film genres provide little beyond Fred Karlin's excellent book *Listening to Movies* (Schirmer, 1994). A sound designer as well as composer, he includes a chapter on artful uses of film sound, though again, Michel Chion also outdid Meyers in *Audio-Vision* and other volumes on the subject. These overlaps are unfortunate, for Meyers' work is crisp and nicely organized. One wonders what he would have accomplished had he been better informed on the existing literature.

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Perspectives on Akira Kurosawa

Edited by James Goodwin. New York: G. K. Hall, 1994. $50.00.

This informative anthology on Akira Kurosawa gathers together previously published material (reviews, essays, and interviews) and newly commissioned writings and translations from 40 critics, filmmakers, and Kurosawa scholars. Intended for specialists and general readers alike, it covers most of the 30 films that Kurosawa has directed in his distinguished 50-year career. The volume is divided into three main sections: "Film Artists on Kurosawa," "Kurosawa on Kurosawa," and "Film Critics on Kurosawa." In his excellent introduction, James Goodwin not only synopsizes each selection in the volume but locates it in the history of Kurosawa criticism, Japanese film studies, or both. This is extremely useful, but it might have been even more helpful if Goodwin had provided a condensed overview of Kurosawa's career in the first few pages of the introduction.

The first two sections establish the major themes of Kurosawa criticism: his bold visual style; his adaptations of Shakespearean and Russian classics; his debt to John Ford; his social and political concerns; his work in the

jidai-geki (period films) and the *gendai-geki* (films about contemporary life); and his position as a humanist and moralist. These sections, however, are very uneven. In "Film Artists on Kurosawa," all but two of the artists who offer tributes are directors (Tony Richardson, Lindsay Anderson, Satyajit Ray, Peter Brook, Peter Hall, George Lucas, Grigori Kozintev, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Steven Spielberg), and two of these directors—Spielberg and Lucas—offer two tributes each. On the plus side, these directorial tributes, besides being fun to read, give us a rare opportunity to see how highly regarded Kurosawa is by his peers outside Japan. Unfortunately, since not one Japanese director is included, readers may fail to realize that Kurosawa is often only grudgingly admired at home. However, the main drawback with the privileging of directors in this section is that other film artists are slighted, including those who have worked with Kurosawa. For this reason the excerpt from a previously untranslated article by Toshiro Mifune is all the more welcome. Written in 1964 after the completion of *Red Beard*, the last of the 14 collaborations between the actor and director, this excerpt offers an admiring but qualified assessment of Kurosawa as a man victimized by his own sense of perfection. At one point Mifune observes, "I often think that if he doesn't delegate some of the responsibility he physically won't be able to last" (34). While this comment must of course be treated with caution since Mifune and Kurosawa had a falling out during the filming of *Red Beard*, it does lead us to ponder the complex nature of this master director.

The second section, "Kurosawa on Kurosawa," is more satisfying than the first, chiefly because it gives Kurosawa the chance to speak about his craft. Here Goodwin draws on Kurosawa's *Something Like an Autobiography* and various interviews, three of which in particular stand out. Tony Rayns' interview with Kurosawa focuses on the director's training in the 1930s and 1940s under Kajiro Yamamoto, who taught him that the two pillars of film-making were scenario writing and editing; Tadao Sato's interview concentrates on the making of *Throne of Blood* (1957) and the influence of Noh drama; and Kyoko Hirano's notes Kurosawa's shift in emphasis in *Ran* (1985) from earlier films like *Ikiru* (1952) and *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960). As Kurosawa says, "We have to exorcise the essential evil in human nature, rather than presenting concrete solutions to problems or directly depicting social problems. Therefore my films might have become more philosophical" (57). This section also discusses a number of Kurosawa's film-making practices: his use of multiple camera set-ups; his repeated rehearsals; his insistence that actors rehearse in full costume; and—in adherence to the principles of medieval Noh playwright-theorist Zeami—his watching on the set "with a detached gaze" (64).

Their merits notwithstanding, the first two sections suffer from one basic problem—the excerpts are too brief and fragmentary. In fact, not only are some excerpts little more than 300 words, but the two sections combined account for only 44 of the anthology's 285 pages.

Happily, section 3, "Critics on Kurosawa," has almost none of these problems. The most comprehensive and substantial section of the anthology, it is nearly 200 pages long, contains over 30 reviews and essays, and deploys a wide range of critical approaches, including auteurism, stylistic and thematic analysis, genre study, semiotics, and deconstruction. As might be expected, special attention is paid to Kurosawa's most acclaimed work (*Rashomon* [1950], *Seven Samurai* [1954], *Throne of Blood*, and *Ikiru*), but lesser-known films like *High and Low* (1963) and recent ones like *Dreams* (1990) and *Rhapsody in August* (1991) are not neglected.

This section boasts a large number of unusually fine essays. Stanley Kauffmann analyzes *Rashomon* and its impact on international cinema. Noël Burch, in two different pieces, investigates key elements of Kurosawa's style, including screen geometry, shot composition, and montage units. Marsha Kinder focuses on how *Kagemusha* (1980) explores "the crucial role played by the selection and interpretation of signs in shaping the course of history and in creating a work of art" (187). Writing on the same film, Frances M. Malpezzi and William M. Clements concentrate on the theme of individuality vs. social responsibility. David Desser shows how Kurosawa's experiments in narrative in *High and Low* are derived from both traditional Japanese storytelling practices and international film. Brian Parker discusses Kurosawa's *Ran* in relationship to Kozintev's and Brook's screen adaptations of *King Lear*, Japanese scrolls, Noh drama, and *bushido* (the samurai code of ethics). James Goodwin, in an article expressly written for the anthology, analyzes Kurosawa's nuclear-themed films, most notably *Record of a Living Being* (1955). Stephen Prince, in two selections, explores the influence of Buddhism on Kurosawa's moral ideas, visual style, and social and political themes. And Masaaki Tsuzuki examines Kurosawa's collaboration with Fumio Hayasaka, his close friend and musical composer for seven films.

Translated for the anthology by Michael Bassett, Tsuzuki's essay provides a rare glimpse into Kurosawa's working relationship with his collaborators, a relationship that James Goodwin describes as a "creative process of contention and reconceptualization" (137). In the case of Hayasaka and Kurosawa, we learn that while both men shared the belief that music should not simply trace the image but work in juxtaposition with it, they also on occasion fiercely disagreed. Nonetheless, they managed, as always, to weather their differences, thanks to "a

strong relationship of trust" (81). Interestingly, Goodwin points out that over most of his career, Kurosawa has had this same type of collaborative relationship with scriptwriters, and that the results have been his finest works. By contrast, when he writes alone, as with *Dreams* and *Rhapsody in August*, his films tend to be less successful. Missing is "the dialogic interaction" of possible truths, different courses of action, and varying points of view (137). Whether or not Goodwin is right, it is precisely this combination of insight and information that gives the anthology added depth and flavor.

It does, however, have weaknesses that have not yet been mentioned. There is nothing, for example, about the economic and industrial conditions under which Kurosawa worked, particularly during his years at Toho Studio. Equally serious is the short shrift given to the role of women in his films. Only one essay addresses this issue—Joan Mellen's, which contends that after *Rashomon*, Kurosawa mainly stereotypes women as angels or demons. While this view fits in with the widely held notion that Kurosawa does not understand women and is not interested in them, Goodwin himself, writing in *Akira Kurosawa and the Intertextual Cinema*, supplies a corrective. He claims that Mellen "disregards the extensive interchange of attributes and personality among principal characters, male and female alike, in films such as *The Idiot* (Hakuchi, 1951) and *Red Beard*" (21). It is an interesting remark, and makes one thing clear: more study is needed on the representation of women and male-female relationships in Kurosawa. But *Perspectives on Akira Kurosawa* does a creditable job of drawing together in one handy volume most of the important information and criticism on Kurosawa. It also must be commended for its highly accessible prose and its inclusion of essays, especially those translated from Japanese, that would otherwise be denied most readers.

ARTHUR NOLLETTI, JR.

■ Arthur Nolletti, Jr., teaches film studies at Framingham State College.

Picturing the Past

The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film

By Sue Harper. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1994. $49.95 cloth; $23.95 paper.

Picturing the Past is a history of the British costume, or historical, film from the 1930s to the 1950s. Wary of the "obviousness" of "ill-digested semiotics" and "vulgar feminism," Sue Harper devotes extraordinary scholarly effort to seeking a form of analysis that has, in her words, "historical resonance." Toward that end, she traces "the precise social and historical contexts" and "the social institutions which frame these texts": the Ministry of Information (MoI), the Foreign Office (FO), the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), the Historical Association, and the British Film Institute (BFI). In delineating the production and reception of popular texts, Harper invokes the writings of Pierre Bourdieu, Foucault's conception of popular memory, and Raymond Williams' Gramscian notion of residual and emergent elements in culture.

The book, in 13 chapters, distinguishes the costume film as a major genre in the interwar, World War II, and postwar period. Chapter 1 maps political constraints on the medium from 1930 to 1939. Harper's narrative of the vicissitudes of the historical film—the locus of various, often conflicting, institutional and industrial pressures—involves producers such as Alexander Korda and Michael Balcon. Chapter 2 focuses on these two producers' contrasting orientations toward uses of the past. Korda's *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) was a major event in the British cinema, showing an aristocratic orientation that is "intellectually eclectic," revealing of "an interest in the language of the psyche and in different types of repression," and contributing to a "delineation of the complexity of the historical process" (21). Harper asserts that this film, along with *Catherine the Great* (1934) and *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1935), was successful because it addressed a female audience, dealt with "cultural themes deeply embedded in British culture," and "emphasized visual splendor" (27). Michael Balcon, by contrast, was intellectually conservative, with a "greater respect for historical verisimilitude than Korda." Balcon-produced films stressed realism, accuracy of detail, and moral improvement. *Jew Süss* (1934), *The Iron Duke* (1935), *Me and Marlborough* (1935), *Tudor Rose* (1936), and *Rhodes of Africa* (1936) present the past "not as a site of pleasure, but of insecurity and pain" (31), in which didacticism, a privileging of the male audience, and middle-class values prevailed.

The opposition between Korda and Balcon runs like a fault line through British producers and institutions of the time, and chapter 3 identifies other producers of historical films, including American studios and independent companies such as British International Pictures (BIP). By examining these various sources, Harper detects several models for the historical film. The BIP films, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1934), *Royal Cavalcade* (1935), and *Abdul the Damned* (1935) garnered some critical acclaim, but did not perform especially well at the box office because they "did not address contempo-

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rary anxieties or provide new symbolic resolutions for them" (42). Twickenham's *The Wandering Jew* (1933), *The Spy of Napoleon* (1936), and *The Vicar of Bray* (1937) were eclectic productions that tried to find popular formulas that worked. The most successful films—New World Pictures' *Under the Red Robe* (1937) and Gaumont-British's *Dr. Syn* (1937)—either followed the Korda school of history or Gainsborough's wartime films. Basil Dean and Herbert Wilcox were successful independent producers; with *Lorna Doone* (1935), *Midshipman Easy* (1935), *Whom the Gods Love* (1936), and *The Mill on the Floss* (1937), Dean produced films that were "celebratory and sentimental" combining "surface accuracy with a mythopoeic approach to history." Wilcox was associated with such historical films as *Nell Gwyn* (1934) and *Peg of Old Drury*, films located in an historical period where "faith in sexual morality was shaken loose."

In gauging audience responses to costume dramas, Harper differentiates between "Lowbrow and Middlebrow Responses in the 1930s" (chapter 4) and "Highbrow Interventions" (chapter 5), enlarging on the controversy over popular history as entertainment or as education. In the early 1930s, "lowbrow" attitudes were expressed in publications such as *Film Weekly* and *Picturegoer* that were favorably disposed toward historical spectacle (though in subsequent years a concern with "real history" began to insinuate itself in these journals). Harper cites evidence from Mass-Observation of cinemagoing in the northern industrial city of Bolton that reveals a sympathetic response toward historical spectacle, especially on the part of women, who placed a higher priority on visual representation than on realism. Middlebrow critics argued for a cinema based on verisimilitude, expressing complaints about the brutalizing effects of historical inaccuracies on the masses. Highbrow attitudes on historical fiction—expressed by the Historical Association in conjunction with the BFI—also emphasized the need to reform public opinion, exhibiting a bias toward educational films in their concern for Englishness.

Chapter 6 outlines how, during World War II, conflicts over the uses of the past became more pronounced, exemplified in differences between the Films Division of the Ministry of Information and the Foreign Office. After 1941, the MoI's emphasis on historical matter—with its "favorite cast of characters—Rhodes to Disraeli" (79)—waned in favor of contemporary issues, but the Foreign Office, with its eye on U.S. relations, remained congenial to historical films. The crucial distinction between the FO (and its creation, the British Council) and the MoI was that the former saw the past as a "site of pleasure," the latter as a site of instruction. Despite the Gainsborough team's involvement in its creation, *Young Mr. Pitt* (1942), an American-financed historical film, represented the past "as a cycle of misery and oppression from which the audience should learn to value the present and its liberties" (91). By contrast, *Lady Hamilton* (1941), made in Hollywood, had Foreign Office support, presenting to the "female audience the possibility of a freer mode of libidinal life" and merging "political populism with erotic appeal" (94).

Chapter 7 discusses the role of propaganda as opposed to popular spectacle in the historical films produced from 1939 to 1945, especially during the war years, commenting on the wartime films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger and the two cycles of historical films introduced by Ealing and Gainsborough. In chapters 8 and 9, Harper contrasts the output of these studios: Ealing projected a middle-class orientation toward history in such music-hall films as *Champagne Charlie* (1944), *I'll Be Your Sweetheart* (1945), and *Trottie True* (1949), melodramas such as *Nicholas Nickleby* (1947) and *The Loves of Joanna Godden* (1947), and biopics such as *Scott of the Antarctic* (1948). The music-hall films, claims Harper, "suggest that the past was a nightmare for the middle class from which it should be prepared to awake" (114).

The films that most exemplify popular history for Harper are the Gainsborough films ("bodice-rippers"), successful from 1943 to 1947. The combination of the twin themes of female willfulness and popular culture in such films as *The Man in Grey* (1943), *The Wicked Lady* (1945), *Caravan* (1946), and *Jassy* (1947) were the basis of their success. Slanted toward women, these melodramas highlighted sentiment and eroticism in contrast to the middle-class orientation of the novels from which they are drawn: "The spectacular aspects of *mise en scène* were foregrounded at Gainsborough and they produced a vision of history where conflicts appeared merely in disguised form" (127).

A rift in the production and reception of historical films occurred not between the war and postwar moment, but between Gainsborough and post-Gainsborough histories. Chapters 10 through 12 trace the vicissitudes of the postwar historical films that did not disappear after the war. This period saw a gradual falling off in melodramas and a rise in "quality" films, such as *Hamlet* (1948), *Fame Is the Spur* (1947), *Great Expectations* (1946), and *Oliver Twist* (1948). The successful Dickens' films are markedly Gothic, and *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1946) offered sumptuous visual effects. Wilcox produced a successful film in *The Courtneys of Curzon Street* (1947), while Korda's popularity with such films as *An Ideal Husband* (1948) was in decline. Harper reminds us that the national costume film was shifting to the international historical epics underwritten by Hollywood.

The metaphor adopted by Harper to describe the costume film is a patchwork quilt: "There may be one overall color which dominates, but the quilt is held together by important fragments from earlier periods or ways of seeing" (188). This metaphor also characterizes Harper's method: her locating of different modes of production, differing ideological predilections, shifting tastes and responses within certain national concerns. Harper consistently identifies popular film with the subversive pleasures of sexuality and femininity in relation to unsettling hierarchical relations of social class. The book's strength lies in its respect for data instead of sole reliance on textual analysis, though in an attempt to counteract the "careless use of representation," the text errs on the side of insufficient analysis of the historical "pleasures of the texts." The volume is a scholarly contribution to an understanding of British cinema—a neglected cinema until recently—and to contemporary research on cinematic uses of the past.

MARCIA LANDY

■ Marcia Landy teaches in the English Department at the University of Pittsburgh.

Queer Looks

Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video

Edited by Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar. New York: Routledge, 1993. $19.95 paper.

Queer Looks is a willfully incoherent and proudly contradictory anthology consisting of an introduction and 35 diverse "pieces" (most but not all of them essays) by critics, visual artists, or, like editors Greyson and Parmar, "bitextual" figures working across media. Although the book's subtitle might suggest some attention to more mainstream fare like *Fried Green Tomatoes* or *Strawberry and Chocolate*, the (only) overall focus of the collection is on "independent film and video by lesbian and gay artists since Stonewall," with "an equal commitment to the voices of critics and of producers" (xiv). Like much of the film and video work discussed therein, the collection is itself a provocative collage, a work of cut-and-paste critical practice rather than a tightly unified collection. Finally, however, it's tempting to read the whole as a kind of generational statement, especially from those who have loudly come out as "queer" despite (or because of) the silencing context of the AIDS crisis.

The collection is constructed in three broad sections. The first, "What a Difference a Gay Makes," groups artistic-political manifestoes, position statements, and considerations of the terms of analysis. Given the growing diversity of visual work that might be identified as gay or lesbian, the material in this section unites only in its demonstration of how artist-activists resist the perhaps once practical but now restrictive construction of a single gay or lesbian identity and community; emphasizing differences from within, these critics and film-makers are committed to staging urban uprisings in the gay ghetto. Pratibha Parmar, for example, "an artist, a lesbian, and a woman of color" (3), argues forcefully for "a new politics of difference" in which "we locate ourselves not within any one community but in the spaces between these different communities" (5). This well-chosen lead essay in fact clears the space and poses the questions for much of what follows. Most immediately, Parmar illuminates what is somewhat less clearly articulated in a series of texts by film and video artists Yvonne Rainer, Catherine Saalfield, Ray Navarro, Richard Kwietniowski, Barbara Hammer, Mark Finch (on/with George Kuchar), and (in conversation) Joy Chamberlin, Isaac Julien, Stuart Marshall, and Parmar. To some extent, all of these diverse figures emphasize the specific and ongoing negotiations between their various assumed identities and their works. Though the latter are inevitably expected to "represent" the former, the works may nevertheless be simultaneously identified as lesbian, feminist, butch, leftist, black, and British. The first section concludes with four critical essays, including Daryl Chin on gay Asian-American Gregg Araki's not-really-very Asian-American or gay films, Jackie Goldsby's early and still insightful discussion of the much-analyzed-since *Paris Is Burning*, Liz Kotz's lucid interpretation of lesbian representation in the work of Abigail Child, Cecilia Dougherty, and Su Friedrich, and Matias Viegener's analysis of the gay punk "homocore" subculture, the collection's smartest and most explicit demonstration of a generational split in the "collective" gay community.

The second, more conventionally "scholarly" section of *Queer Looks*, "Favorite Aunts and Uncles," is the most rewarding. A collection of often ambivalent "tributes" to gay and lesbian mentors, these essays articulate patterns of queer cultural inheritance, influence, and debt outside of conventional Oedipal lineages. Standout essays here include Thomas Waugh (modern gay erotica's premier historian) on gay men as visual objects and subjects from the Victorians to the present; Martha Gever on Stuart Marshall's *Bright Eyes*, one of the first

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Edited by Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar. New York: Routledge, 1993. $19.95 paper.

Queer Looks is a willfully incoherent and proudly contradictory anthology consisting of an introduction and 35 diverse "pieces" (most but not all of them essays) by critics, visual artists, or, like editors Greyson and Parmar, "bitextual" figures working across media. Although the book's subtitle might suggest some attention to more mainstream fare like *Fried Green Tomatoes* or *Strawberry and Chocolate*, the (only) overall focus of the collection is on "independent film and video by lesbian and gay artists since Stonewall," with "an equal commitment to the voices of critics and of producers" (xiv). Like much of the film and video work discussed therein, the collection is itself a provocative collage, a work of cut-and-paste critical practice rather than a tightly unified collection. Finally, however, it's tempting to read the whole as a kind of generational statement, especially from those who have loudly come out as "queer" despite (or because of) the silencing context of the AIDS crisis.

The collection is constructed in three broad sections. The first, "What a Difference a Gay Makes," groups artistic-political manifestoes, position statements, and considerations of the terms of analysis. Given the growing diversity of visual work that might be identified as gay or lesbian, the material in this section unites only in its demonstration of how artist-activists resist the perhaps once practical but now restrictive construction of a single gay or lesbian identity and community; emphasizing differences from within, these critics and film-makers are committed to staging urban uprisings in the gay ghetto. Pratibha Parmar, for example, "an artist, a lesbian, and a woman of color" (3), argues forcefully for "a new politics of difference" in which "we locate ourselves not within any one community but in the spaces between these different communities" (5). This well-chosen lead essay in fact clears the space and poses the questions for much of what follows. Most immediately, Parmar illuminates what is somewhat less clearly articulated in a series of texts by film and video artists Yvonne Rainer, Catherine Saalfield, Ray Navarro, Richard Kwietniowski, Barbara Hammer, Mark Finch (on/with George Kuchar), and (in conversation) Joy Chamberlin, Isaac Julien, Stuart Marshall, and Parmar. To some extent, all of these diverse figures emphasize the specific and ongoing negotiations between their various assumed identities and their works. Though the latter are inevitably expected to "represent" the former, the works may nevertheless be simultaneously identified as lesbian, feminist, butch, leftist, black, and British. The first section concludes with four critical essays, including Daryl Chin on gay Asian-American Gregg Araki's not-really-very Asian-American or gay films, Jackie Goldsby's early and still insightful discussion of the much-analyzed-since *Paris Is Burning*, Liz Kotz's lucid interpretation of lesbian representation in the work of Abigail Child, Cecilia Dougherty, and Su Friedrich, and Matias Viegener's analysis of the gay punk "homocore" subculture, the collection's smartest and most explicit demonstration of a generational split in the "collective" gay community.

The second, more conventionally "scholarly" section of *Queer Looks*, "Favorite Aunts and Uncles," is the most rewarding. A collection of often ambivalent "tributes" to gay and lesbian mentors, these essays articulate patterns of queer cultural inheritance, influence, and debt outside of conventional Oedipal lineages. Standout essays here include Thomas Waugh (modern gay erotica's premier historian) on gay men as visual objects and subjects from the Victorians to the present; Martha Gever on Stuart Marshall's *Bright Eyes*, one of the first

and still most powerful creative responses to the AIDS crisis; Gregg Bordowitz's moving and defiant tracing of the "queer structure of feeling" linking Charles Ludlum's Ridiculous Theater Company to recent AIDS-activist video; Kobena Mercer's brilliant reading of Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied* and Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston*; and Patricia White's indispensable essay on the still underappreciated Ulrike Ottinger's *Madame X: An Absolute Ruler*. These essays remind us that vital criticism has always been an essential and reciprocal component of any avant-garde practice; each of these engaged essays actually enhances the work it discusses. Other contributions to this section, by Sara Diamond, Andrei Plakhov, Jerry Tartaglia, Michelle Parkerson, and Douglas Crimp, are less substantial as criticism, but still offer a variety of pleasures and insights. Plakhov's "No Sex in the USSR," for example, although dated, provides an important historical survey of gay film and government persecution of homosexual representation in the Soviet Union.

The final section of *Queer Looks*, "Bedtime Stories," is a bit of a tease—a final turn to the sexual desires that supposedly, stereotypically, precede the political and historical concerns of the first two sections in the everyday lives of gays and lesbians. Haunted, as Richard Fung notes, "by the ghost of Michel Foucault" (359), these essays "all proceed from the notion that the social and the sexual are inextricable" (301). As expressed most directly by Fung, the ongoing problem here is how to produce work (whether visual or verbal) that succeeds as both pornography and pedagogy; or, specifically with regard to AIDS, the question is, How do you get people hot *and* save their lives? While many of the artists' texts in this section are remarkably candid, they aren't always very self-critical or introspective (Fung's essay is a brave exception). Contributions by film-makers Lawrence Chua, Sunil Gupta, Wieland Speck, and Nick Deocampo are valuable for the perspectives offered by their national identities—Thai, Indian, German, and Filipino, respectively—but remain tentative and hesitant statements of purpose, altogether less convincing than the artists' more daring films and videos. The critical essays here include B. Ruby Rich's typically lucid discussion of cross-race desire in lesbian relationships (with attention to Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames* and Sheila McLaughlin's *She Must Be Seeing Things*, among other films); an interview with McLaughlin by Alison Butler, which tends to confirm that otherwise like-minded critics and artists still employ different discourses; Mandy Merck's review of the limitations and concessions of the lesbian art cinema (exemplified by *Desert Hearts*); and John Greyson's insightful discussion of the Ontario police surveillance practices that informed the making of his film *Urinal*. In general, this section loops back to the concerns of Parmar's opening essay, adding sexual spice to the interrogation of the multiple and often contradictory claims for identification in the never-really-private lives of gays and lesbians.

An activist response to the AIDS crisis pervades the collection, and though the editors proclaim this "a book designed not to wallow in the grimness, but to fight back against it" (xiv), this is yet another queer studies anthology that memorializes some of its contributors (dedicated to the late Stuart Marshall, *Queer Looks* also mourns the death of contributor Ray Navarro). In addition to this unrelenting sign of the collection's generational origins, it's also somewhat surprising to recognize that, despite claims of "differences from within," many of the analyses here attest to a consistent style for contemporary queer media. Whether defined as Parmar's "hybrid aesthetic" (10), Bordowitz's "queer theft of straight culture" (217), Mercer's "appropriation as a figure in diaspora culture" (247), or White's "visual and aural collage technique" (275), the collection implies a surprising codification of recent gay and lesbian work into a "house style" of cut-and-paste pastiche more broadly associated with postmodernism. Linked to gay and lesbian politics, this style is commonly celebrated as aesthetically disruptive, socially transgressive, and politically resistant in these essays (and, taken example by example, I might agree). But this concentration of gay and lesbian media into a consistent style also prevalent on MTV or in the films of Oliver Stone begs questions not often asked or addressed here: Will the next gay or lesbian resistance to "clone" fashion emerge as the re-production of "straightforward" documentaries or realist narratives in an aggressive denial of the queer hegemony of "radical" juxtaposition and intertextual montage?

The series of text and image collages in *Queer Looks*—by Marusia Bociurkiw (words and stills from her *Bodies in Trouble*), Kaucyila Brooke (a sort of photo-comic book), John Di Stefano (on his "Affair with Pasolini"), and Donna Evans and Jean Carlomusto (a cut-out "lesbian visibility lampshade" designed literally to illuminate)—probably add more to the campy irreverence and planned heterogeneity of the book than anything else. Although a very welcome resource as it is, the continual difficulty—with no thanks to major videostore chains—of viewing most of the works discussed in *Queer Looks* makes one wish for the book's "accompanying video" or CD-ROM. Writers on avant-garde film often note the irony of discussing films easier to read about than to see, and perhaps the most valuable function of *Queer Looks* may be to serve as a list of recommendations for courageous and well-funded (a fantasy combination!) film programmers and teachers. As the success of gay and lesbian film festivals in larger

cities and on many campuses proves, if you show them, they will come.

COREY K. CREEKMUR

■ Corey K. Creekmur teaches film and cultural studies at Wayne State University and is the coeditor, with Alexander Doty, of *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture* (Duke University Press, 1995).

Russian Critics on the Cinema of Glasnost

Edited by Michael Brashinsky and Andrew Horton. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994. $54.95.

This high-spirited and articulate collection of reviews, many of them wittily phrased and most of them translated into English with comparable verve, will be of undoubted value to those who know something about Russian culture and cinema or who have seen some of the remarkable films of the glasnost era (1984–90). The editors have gathered 23 short articles by 16 of Russia's then most active and influential film critics. The authors include some whose careers began during Khrushchev's "thaw" (like culture critic Lev Anninsky, screenwriter and film reviewer Tatyana Khlopyankina, and film critic and scholar Maya Turovskaya), but the volume is dominated by the younger voices in Russian cinema criticism (including semiotician of culture Mikhail Yampolsky, freelance reviewer Marina Drozdova, "parallel" video and film-maker Igor Aleinikov, screenwriter and counterculture spokesperson Sergei Dobrotvorsky, and Alexander Timofeevsky, "considered by many the most influential film critic of the glasnost generation" [158]). Other contemporary film critic-journalists, like St. Petersburg's Tatyana Moskvina, provide extremely well-balanced, less partisan views of the major films discussed.

Seven of the articles are general assessments of the state of Russian cinema; 16 are reviews of ten of the period's most important films. Because the majority of the films reviewed here have had some U.S. distribution, many of them are currently available in video stores; the reader unfamiliar with the films, however, is in no position to assess the various detailed assertions about their style and structure. The authors comment on the films, at times heatedly and in opposition to one another, but there is often no "zero point" of description for the films in the volume; the editors provide only very brief synopses for each film (a few sentences). Only in a few of the best articles does one gain a balanced, contextualized vantage point or the grounding of a detailed description.

The younger critics tend to be more perceptive about innovations in genre and style, while the "thaw" critics (the "sixtiesniks," as the editors directly render the Russian term) are more drawn to social issues and moral concerns. Leading off the volume, Yampolsky asserts that the Soviet cinema heritage is a major obstacle to artistic progress. The scorn intellectuals had for popular taste pointed the country's most talented directors (like Tarkovsky and Paradzhanov) toward difficult high art. In the popular genres, second-rate directors toiled within the didactic parameters of Socialist Realist genres. Thus, the "mesmerizing . . . visual qualities which spur the viewer's psychological pleasure in Western film is largely absent" (13). In his very colorful style, Yampolsky calls for more "erotic allure" in casting, and points out that new myths must replace the folklorically based image of the Soviet superhero.

As one of the leading representatives of the avant-garde, Dobrotvorsky accurately describes the different branches of independent experimental cinema. He argues that the Moscow school led by Igor and Gleb Aleinikov, sought to expand the frontiers of film language through the expressive potential of new kinds of imagery, whereas Leningrad's "parallel cinema" (particularly the films of Yufit and Kondratyev) delivered shock therapy to "logical social consciousness." Dobrotvorsky's survey of the movements is sharp and he gives excellent and concise descriptions of the major films.

The younger critics are much more likely to identify the major flaws in recent films, even while they express approval for certain stylistic experiments or tendencies within them. Mikhail Trofimenkov, whose concerns are close to Yampolsky's in many respects, delivers a remarkable assessment of one of the first glasnost films to give former political prisoners a heroic role, *The Cold Summer of '53* (in which two recently freed political exiles defend a far Northern village from an attack by ordinary criminals). Trofimenkov candidly calls the film too wordy, too schematic, and too clichéd in its borrowings from the Soviet WWII film genre. He urges more radical departures from the moralizing tone and ideological stereotypes of Soviet Socialist Realism, stating that "a renaissance of our cinema will come through radical experiments with language, cinematic and verbal" (85).

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Timofeevsky's essay is the most theoretically sophisticated in assessing the work of postmodern direc-

tors like Nugmanov and Solovyev. In his review of the latter's *Assa*, he unmasks the different popular genres (gangster, melodrama, rock-and-roll film, historical drama) which underlie the narrative, and praises the film's smooth blend of reality and the absurd. He is critical, though, of its one-dimensional valorization of rock-and-roll culture and its occasional attempts at serious psychological drama, which mar the film's playful whimsicality. Writing on *A Forgotten Tune for Flute*, Timofeevsky argues that for two decades director Eldar Ryazanov took as his targets forms of official and civic behavior which lay just *within* the bounds of what the censors would allow. Ryazanov's mix of critique and romantic lyricism suited the pulse of his audience, the technical intelligentsia. Indulging passively in Ryazanov's critique "literally gave people back their lost dignity" (73). However, Timofeevsky notes that under the rapidly changing conditions of *glasnost*, films like Ryazanov's now reveal less that is startling about society than does the evening news.

Of the film reviewers more inclined toward general cultural issues, Turovskaya and Moskvina are the most interesting. Turovskaya stresses that the most important aspect of the banned *Commissar* was its portrayal of an unidealized humanism in its characters. For Moskvina, what is striking about *Little Vera* is not the film's frequently emphasized naturalism and social criticism, but how richly it depicts the sensuality and passions of contemporary Russian life.

The volume is particularly interesting in its juxtaposition of conflicting reviews. For example, in her admiring review of *Repentance*, Khlopyankina is quick to note that the film's theatrical grotesqueries are no more bizarre than actual moments in recent history. Indeed, what she admires most are the scenes which capture the tragic pathos of the time more literally—as when the wives of prisoners search through a stack of felled logs for possible messages from loved ones carved upon them. For Igor Aleinikov, however, "the movie lacked any political sex or gender" (54). Its allusions were too transparent and too mild, merely labeling symbolically the awful events: "All the symbols slide along the viewer's consciousness as a cheap and useless game" (56).

The four reviews of Sokurov's *Days of Eclipse* range from admiring to derisory. Victor Bozhovich evokes marvelously the strange mystery of the film's images of the Central Asian desert, and the resulting sense of being lost in a "vast, burnt, devastated, and profaned land." Turovskaya applies Bakhtin's concept in describing the intricate composition of the film's *chronotope*, an expanded, searing space which warps time and fuses cultures. Yampolsky explains that the narrative is deliberately obscure because "the reasons that affect the action in one layer are often hidden in another . . . " (114), with visual symbols holding a key to the "vertical" organization of causal relations. Moskvina, on the other hand, admits the powerful affect of some of Sokurov's visual compositions, but finds his totalizing image of the "East" a confusing hodgepodge of diverse cultural elements and the film's philosophical pretensions unoriginal and boring.

The volume's editors provide brief but useful summaries after each grouping of film reviews, thus giving the reader some sense of where the divergent assessments come from in a larger cultural framework. It's enough background to be of use to those with some knowledge, and also enough background to intrigue those without.

HERBERT EAGLE

■ Herbert Eagle teaches at the University of Michigan and has published widely on Russian and East European film.

They Must Be Represented

The Politics of Documentary

By Paula Rabinowitz. New York: Verso, 1994. $64.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Paula Rabinowitz's new book on documentary is an avowedly political work, and like the reference of its title—to Marx's famous remark concerning the French peasantry, "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented"—bespeaks a sense of urgency in her project. With a Marxist/feminist perspective, Rabinowitz looks at American documentary work from several periods of "heightened political crisis in the United States" (13)—the Depression in the 30s, the Vietnam war in the 60s, and the more recent women's and gay and lesbian movements in the 80s—in a variety of media (photography, cinema, prose) that represent the un(der/mis)represented: "workers, migrants, poor people, women, gays, African Americans, Latinos," according to the author's own litany (218).

Rabinowitz's stated purpose is to help provide these marginalized groups with political agency without violating or misappropriating them. Mobilizing theoretical issues of representation in relation to class, race, sex, and gender, she discusses an impressive range of material:

tors like Nugmanov and Solovyev. In his review of the latter's *Assa*, he unmasks the different popular genres (gangster, melodrama, rock-and-roll film, historical drama) which underlie the narrative, and praises the film's smooth blend of reality and the absurd. He is critical, though, of its one-dimensional valorization of rock-and-roll culture and its occasional attempts at serious psychological drama, which mar the film's playful whimsicality. Writing on *A Forgotten Tune for Flute*, Timofeevsky argues that for two decades director Eldar Ryazanov took as his targets forms of official and civic behavior which lay just *within* the bounds of what the censors would allow. Ryazanov's mix of critique and romantic lyricism suited the pulse of his audience, the technical intelligentsia. Indulging passively in Ryazanov's critique "literally gave people back their lost dignity" (73). However, Timofeevsky notes that under the rapidly changing conditions of *glasnost*, films like Ryazanov's now reveal less that is startling about society than does the evening news.

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including the work of James Agee and Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Margaret Bourke-White, and Pare Lorentz; Hollywood movies of the 1930s such as *Gold Diggers of 1933* and *Sullivan's Travels*; the Vietnam reportage of women writers such as Mary McCarthy, Martha Gellhorn, and Susan Sontag; television docudrama; cinéma vérité; the "feminist counter-documentaries" of film-makers Chick Strand, Yvonne Rainer, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Jill Godmilow; and George Holliday's videotape of the Rodney King beating.

In the theoretical chapter that precedes these analyses, Rabinowitz addresses the relations between history, documentary, and memory and how these relations inform the documentary's particular modes of spectatorial address and mobilization to agency. She offers a fresh perspective on issues of documentary and its relation to the real by broadening the field of documentary texts open to critical scrutiny and emphasizing issues of gender.

Rabinowitz claims that gender is "a central category within documentary rhetoric" (6) because documentary crosses boundaries such as public and private, personal and political, aesthetic and archival. The logic here seems dubious, and even she admits that the lengthy discussion of gendered vision and its relation to class in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* through Freud and Lukács may be somewhat forced (40). Sometimes, as in her discussion of Strand's *Soft Fiction*, her textual analyses succeeds in illuminating the importance of the works in the context of gender; at other times, as in the concluding chapter on the King video, the connection is weak.

Perhaps inevitably, given the scope to which the book aspires, its results are mixed. Her discussions of the practice of photographing the poor ("Slumming in the Thirties"), from the early work of Arthur Munby in England through Bourke-White, Evans, and Agee, is particularly good, as it relates precise issues of class to theories of the gaze and representation, and voyeurism to class (un)consciousness. Close analysis of both photographs and text, and their relations, clearly demonstrate Trinh's observation that such work is always a "conversation of 'us' with 'us' about 'them'." But the discussion of *Sullivan's Travels* is disappointing; the relatively lengthy consideration of Lorentz never quite manages to make its position clear; and the discussion of women's radical and proletarian fiction of the 30s (an area in which Rabinowitz has previously published) seems merely grafted on.

Given her awareness that the voice of the documenter always intrudes on that of the subject being documented, Rabinowitz is at pains to personalize her own critical voice at various points throughout the book. She wants to come to terms with her own pleasure, she says (3), although the subsequent chapters do not always make it clear what, if any, pleasures she takes from the works under discussion. In fact, on occasion it seems as if Rabinowitz's abiding response is more guilt than pleasure. Speaking of a Bourke-White photograph of a poor black woman, for example, Rabinowitz emphasizes that she "felt ashamed for her and for Bourke-White and ultimately for myself" (70). Sometimes, however, this personal tone is even more problematic. In the course of establishing the book's concerns, we are provided with an intermittent political autobiography that can seem more therapeutic than expository. In discussing her sometimes uneasy historical relation to party-line feminism, Rabinowitz declares: "I like being fucked by men, and I was a mother (of a son) to boot" (3). Such knowledge, depending on the context, might be relevant, but here there is, in the end, really not much of a discernible connection between the book's textual analyses and the author's sexual preferences.

Presumably the reason for Rabinowitz's willingness to tell us intimate details about herself has to do with her informing belief in the reader's potential empowerment through interpretive appropriation. But even if it is true that "audiences of all stripes do what they will with images," as she asserts at the outset (1), it is mere conjecture to claim of *Not a Love Story*, Bonnie Sher Klein's feminist anti-pornography film made for the National Film Board of Canada, that "audiences in a nation with restrictions on the public display of pornography are not necessarily seeing a tale of mourning and outrage; many are watching for the crotch shots which are meant to horrify, not titillate" (2), and just wrong to cite "Robert Flaherty's reenactments of the whale kill" (245) in the context of a discussion of performance in documentary.

The obligatory invocation of postmodernism also invites generalizations that further weakens what might otherwise be a much more interesting book. To assert, for example, that *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is "a quintessentially postmodern text" because it mixes genres, forms, and discourses (46), would seem—oddly, given the context of this book—to privilege form over content or political affect. (Of *The Spanish Earth*, Rabinowitz writes that "Its aesthetic achievement was judged as much by the eighteen ambulances bought with the proceeds of its U.S. screenings as by its cinematic beauty" [180]). Further, it stretches the term beyond any degree of useful precision. Can we really say that the work of committed documentaries, because they "collapse the divide between action and representation" is "fundamentally postmodern" (102)? Similarly, her contention that the heightened political climate of the 1930s produced "the first truly national popular visual culture" is questionable (her distinctions between "popular culture," "people's culture," and "public culture" is not very helpful) and never adequately demonstrated.

They Must be Represented doesn't hold together because it fails to convince that the issues of gender it addresses are consistently crucial to the history of American political documentary. But this does not diminish the intelligence and insight of particular analyses within it. And, in any event, Rabinowitz's concern that as a middle-class white female intellectual she do the right thing in her scholarship cannot but be applauded. In the end, she may not be able to reconcile the defense's use of the video in the Rodney King case with her approving of the advantage of writerly texts to be appropriated by various readers, but her understanding of her own place in the process should make us all reflect more deeply on our own professional lives.

BARRY KEITH GRANT

■ Barry Keith Grant teaches at Brock University in Ontario, Canada.

Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent

By Matthew Bernstein, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994. $35.00.

For film critics still riding the wave of rampant auteurism, the classical Hollywood producer ranks below even the screenwriter as a creative force in the manufacture of quality motion pictures. Irving Thalberg gets his fair share of credit, but the rest of Hollywood's front-office boys are deemed greedheads to be circumvented, not partners in constructive collaboration. Among a generation of colorful characters brandishing memos (Selznick), cigars (Zanuck), and malapropisms (Goldwyn), Walter Wanger's logo above the title bring no signature image to mind. Yet the films that bear his brand name have proven much more vivid—among them *Queen Christina*, *Stagecoach*, *Scarlet Street*, *I Want to Live!*, and, for better and worse, *Cleopatra*. Matthew Bernstein's incisive and fact-filled inquiry may not restore the producer to the top of the studio system heap, or even propel Wanger into the ranks of his better-known cohorts, but it certainly qualifies as a fully realized, A-line biopic of a fascinating life in the movies.

Like classical Hollywood, the arc of Wanger's career rises in the 1930s and 1940s, slumps in the 1950s, rebounds briefly, and then goes belly-up in the 1960s. Born in 1894 of an uppercrust Jewish family from San Francisco, Wanger (rhymes with ranger), never fit the mogul stereotype of a former rag merchant barking out orders in Yiddish. Erudite and urbane even as a youngster, he grew up under the tutelage of loving aunts devoted to art, uplift, and young Walter. While still a teenager, he became infatuated with the avant-garde theater of Max Rheinhardt and Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Soon Wanger was staging campus productions of his European models during a hyperactive undergraduate career at Dartmouth College, which he left without the degree but with the showbiz bug. After a sojourn in New York theater (including a season built around Alla Nazimova) and service in the Great War with the Creel Committee, he made the inevitable passage to Hollywood. A player in the studio system from its infancy to full maturity, Wanger waltzed through virtually every means of motion picture production with an ever changing dance card of studio partners. In turn at Paramount, Columbia, MGM, United Artists, and Universal, he served variously as studio executive, unit producer, contract producer, and semi/quasi-independent producer.

Bernstein packs an astonishing amount of solid film history into his lucid chronicle of Wanger's whirlwind corporate liaisons. Though a few tantalizing paragraphs discreetly describe Wanger's casting-couch reputation, the author dishes out little dirt. *Walter Wanger* is a businesslike biography in both senses, a capable and comprehensive work that concentrates on the man's professions, not his psyche or peccadillos. The vantage suits the subject, for Wanger had a mania for personal record keeping and written communication. His is a well-documented, privileged life traceable in studio archives, private papers, and the public record. Bernstein's own tireless attention to the production details of Wanger's business dealings—financial data, interviews, trade press reports—attests to his scrupulous scholarly standards. If Wanger's attitude to motion picture production tended to be hands-off, Bernstein's approach to motion picture history is thorough, engaged, and shrewd.

Bernstein is particularly good at following the money and peering into what he rightly calls "the nebulous nature of the producer's role." There is a knowing irony in the book's subtitle—*Hollywood Independent*—for whether he be studio hireling, unit producer, semi-independent, or fully independent, the motion picture producer works in a business with ties that bind. In untangling them, Bernstein provides an enlightening organizational chart of the strings and strains of production within the classical Hollywood system. This is no mean task. As Bernstein points out, at Diana Productions, the semi-independent company Wanger formed with Fritz Lang in 1945, neither Diana's distributor nor its financial officers "understood the obscure distinctions between Wanger and Lang's responsibilities as executive pro-

They Must be Represented doesn't hold together because it fails to convince that the issues of gender it addresses are consistently crucial to the history of American political documentary. But this does not diminish the intelligence and insight of particular analyses within it. And, in any event, Rabinowitz's concern that as a middle-class white female intellectual she do the right thing in her scholarship cannot but be applauded. In the end, she may not be able to reconcile the defense's use of the video in the Rodney King case with her approving of the advantage of writerly texts to be appropriated by various readers, but her understanding of her own place in the process should make us all reflect more deeply on our own professional lives.

BARRY KEITH GRANT

■ Barry Keith Grant teaches at Brock University in Ontario, Canada.

Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent

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For film critics still riding the wave of rampant auteurism, the classical Hollywood producer ranks below even the screenwriter as a creative force in the manufacture of quality motion pictures. Irving Thalberg gets his fair share of credit, but the rest of Hollywood's front-office boys are deemed greedheads to be circumvented, not partners in constructive collaboration. Among a generation of colorful characters brandishing memos (Selznick), cigars (Zanuck), and malapropisms (Goldwyn), Walter Wanger's logo above the title bring no signature image to mind. Yet the films that bear his brand name have proven much more vivid—among them *Queen Christina*, *Stagecoach*, *Scarlet Street*, *I Want to Live!*, and, for better and worse, *Cleopatra*. Matthew Bernstein's incisive and fact-filled inquiry may not restore the producer to the top of the studio system heap, or even propel Wanger into the ranks of his better-known cohorts, but it certainly qualifies as a fully realized, A-line biopic of a fascinating life in the movies.

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ducer and producer." Neither, apparently, did Wanger and Lang.

Straightforward film interpretations enliven the drier accounts of institutional history and corporate stock transactions. Bernstein moves confidently from economics to aesthetics, from location shooting to film theory. (Keeping faith with Wanger's own theatrical background, he also attends avidly to set design, lighting, and choreography.) Though Wanger-produced films could be pure ephemera, a goodly share stand as monuments to the genius of the system—Borzage's *History Is Mad at Night* (1937), Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939), Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), Lang's *You Only Live Once* (1937) and *Scarlet Street* (1945), Ophuls' *The Reckless Moment* (1949), and Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956). Nonetheless, that litany does invite the suspicion that the best Wanger films are causally linked to the best directors, that Wanger's signal contribution as a producer was to leave well enough alone. In the end, Bernstein avers: "Herein lay [Wanger's] strengths and limitations as a producer: the confidence to give creative talent their due without the skills of Selznick, Thalberg, or Zanuck to improve their work."

In truth, Wanger signed off on more than his share of socially conscious and artistically pretentious bombs. Besides *Blockade* (1938), the compromised and controversial melodrama of the Spanish Civil War, and Ford's *The Long Voyage Home* (1940), a misbegotten attempt to class-up the movies with Eugene O'Neill, he is linked to two of the biggest boondoggles in Hollywood history—*Joan of Arc* (1948) and *Cleopatra* (1963). From his experience with the Creel Committee during World War I, Wanger may have absorbed too earnest a sense of the political and cultural power of the motion picture. Whether as long-time president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences or as a self-appointed conscience, he waged a relentless campaign to uplift the movies. "No producer in the industry, with the possible exception of Goldwyn, was as visible," asserts Bernstein. "None were as openly concerned with using the movies as a social force."

Yet Wanger was too much the businessman to let a tendentious agenda deep-six box-office revenue. For every work of social-politico seriousness—*Gabriel over the White House* (1933), *The President Vanishes* (1935), *Blockade, Gung Ho!* (1943)—a raft of sheer dreck bore his name. Bernstein admires his man, but never enough to short circuit critical acumen. He drily observes that, in the main, "the obscurity of Wanger's unit-produced features [at Paramount in the 1930s] is well deserved" and adjudges *I Met My Love Again* (1938) "a waste of time" and *Vogues of 1938* (1937) "a bore." The lack of special pleading makes one listen more carefully when the author recommends *Canyon Passage* (1946) as "one of Wanger's most underrated films" or advocates *Private Worlds* (1935) as a "startling" psychodrama.

Professionally and personally, Wanger's postwar decline makes for a mournful end reel. Like Edward G. Robinson in *Scarlet Street*, the respectable businessman suddenly veers off course and walks into a film noir universe. In one of the most deliciously salacious scandals in the annals of Hollywood babylon, he confronts his wife, Joan Bennett, and her lover, agent Jennings Lang, in the MCA parking lot in Beverly Hills, draws a .38-calibre pistol, and shoots Lang in the groin. Wanger serves 92 days in prison and, worse yet, is sentenced upon release to the only studio that will have him—Monogram Pictures. Remarkably, his career rejuvenated with *Riot in Cell Block 11* (1954), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and *I Want to Live!* (1958), an informal prison trilogy reflecting Wanger's own sense of emotional and financial entrapment. His swan song, however, was a disaster for the ages. As the titular if emasculated producer of *Cleopatra*, Wanger was held personally responsible for the runaway costs of a production he had only marginal authority over. With a $44 million price tag as the last entry on his resume, he spun his wheels until his death in 1968. He left his daughter an estate of $18,000.

Acknowledging the "mixed legacy" of his subject, Bernstein concludes with a tempered yet affectionate evaluation of Wanger as "one of the most humane, significant, and influential producers, studio-employed or semi-independent, in Hollywood history." No doubt. Yet the nature of Wanger's contribution to the Hollywood classics that bear his name, if not his imprint, remains elusive, a hands-off style still just out of reach. Except perhaps when he had the wisdom to act the part every director prefers in the helpful producer—to sign the checks and then go away.

THOMAS DOHERTY

■ Thomas Doherty teaches at Brandeis University.

Waving the Flag

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Except for a brief flurry of attention during the Free Cinema movement of the late 50s and early 60s

and an even briefer flirtation with the "swinging London" of the later 60s, international audiences and scholarly writers, until fairly recently, paid British cinema relatively scant attention. Instead, they preferred to lavish their attention on the seemingly more adventurous national cinemas of France, Japan, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Italy. Even native scholars, who provided some of the best commentary about world cinema, spent little time exploring their own, instead engaging in what Charles Barr labels "cultural self-laceration." Robin Wood's 1974 comment spoke for generations of British critics when he disdainfully said, "My own reluctance to confront the British cinema is simply attributable to my sense that its achievement is so limited and so much less interesting than that of other countries."

During the 1980s, however, British cinema began to command sustained scholarly attention and obtain commercial success. Both *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *Gandhi* (1983) swept the Academy Awards, thus validating scriptwriter Colin Welland's exuberant declaration at the awards ceremony, "The British are coming!" Diverse talents (Stephen Frears, Derek Jarman, Peter Greenaway, Mike Leigh, Isaac Julien, Ken Loach, among others) created unique and significant films that found receptive audiences. Scholary activity followed quickly. Indeed, through the entire decade of the 80s, and continuing on into the 90s, a virtual flood of academic works dealing with neglected aspects of the British cinema has been published, finally illuminating the diversity of film-making within the United Kingdom. In particular, books by Marcia Landy, Antonia Lant, Charles Barr, Martin Auty/Nick Roddick, Robert Murphy, Duncan Petrie, and John Hill demonstrate the intellectual activity inspired by British films.

We can now add an exciting new book to this distinguished list: Andrew Higson's *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain.* A lecturer in Film Studies at the University of East Anglia, Higson presents a fascinating and challenging examination of the connections between cinema and culture. The usual discussion of any national cinema, as Higson notes in the very first sentence of his first chapter, has proceeded with "great imprecision." Indeed, the goal of describing national identity—an incredibly mercurial concept resting on ideological quicksand—and then relating it to film culture usually seems attainable more through fanciful wish fulfillment than rigorous critical analysis. Higson clearly knows this. He begins, therefore, by demonstrating how the concept of national cinema has been used in four different ways: 1) in economic terms, with a focus on the industry; 2) in exhibition and consumption terms, with emphasis on the audience; 3) in terms of cultural specificity, with attention to the connections between films from the same country; 4) in representational terms, with concern for a common style or world view. Such an overarching discussion then leads Higson to the core of the book, where he offers three detailed case studies of different, but clearly interdependent, areas of British film-making which illustrate various uses of national identity to obtain marketplace success.

Higson's first case study is an example of the "heritage film"—those British movies that reproduce (or simply invent) a national heritage for the screen. Though modern filmgoers are certainly more familiar with contemporary examples of this strategy in pictures like *Chariots of Fire* and almost all the Merchant-Ivory productions, Higson selects a far earlier film to make his case: Cecil Hepworth's *Comin' Thro the Rye* (1923/4). He sees it as part of a "self-conscious bid to find an English idiom for film by reference to a perceived heritage." In other words, Hepworth was consciously searching for an alternative visual language to challenge classical American cinema, one through which he could simultaneously celebrate his vision of a national heritage and secure a share of the international market. Hepworth's visual alternative was "Pictorialism." This commonly accepted aesthetic for 19th-century photography, used primarily for landscape pictures, made the viewer a spectator rather than a participant in the scene. When translated to film, therefore, it encouraged the spectator "to look at it from a distance as an object of beauty rather than a narrative space to be inhabited by character and spectator" (42). Clearly, such a visual strategy—with its languid pacing, tableaux shot in depth, and slow cutting rate—places Hepworth far closer to European art films (and prefigures André Bazin) than to popular American movies, and it can be seen as one way British film-makers fought the increasing domination of their native cinema by American aesthetic standards.

Higson's second case history revolves around two box-office successes of 1934, *Sing As We Go* and *Evergreen*, which star the biggest British female stars of the period, Gracie Fields and Jessie Matthews. Here, he contrasts two commercially popular films that utilize different ways of achieving their success. *Sing As We Go* uses the indigenous popular traditions of the musical hall and northern working-class culture to make a product aimed primarily at the home market; *Evergreen* incorporates classical Hollywood formulas to infiltrate the much larger foreign market, directly challenging American products in the United States. Higson demonstrates how these two films represent two distinct production policies, the latter directly competing with Hollywood and the former looking for a special niche in the market. Because the two films exhibit different economic and cultural criteria, Higson sees them as "strategies adopted by different sectors of the rapidly expanding British film industry to create a national popular cinema" (99). As

such, concludes Higson, both films aspire to the position of national cinema, but by different economic and cultural routes, one seeking to win an audience by referencing specific British traditions, and the other by adopting an international perspective.

Higson's final case history analyzes the famed British documentary-realist tradition. Here he moves from documentary ideas of the 1930s, to narrative documentaries, to commercial films made during World War II that draw up documentary practices. Concentrating on two box-office favorites, *Millions Like Us* (1943) and *This Happy Breed* (1944), Higson shows how documentary practices within fictional settings represent the British nation as a family, and how both films are set against classical Hollywood models. These films, he argues, form a distinct British film genre, "the melodrama of everyday life," that evolves out of diverse national traditions but incorporates documentary ideas into domestic stories. This, in turn, produces a fiction film which "purports to deal realistically with life in contemporary Britain" (262). Higson suggests that such "urban pastorals" serve as "markers of national identity" that include "necessary signs of quality." The former marks them as British while the latter assumes the universal status of good art.

In his last chapter, "Constructing a National Cinema in Britain: Some Conclusions," Higson takes his arguments into contemporary British cinema, discussing, albeit briefly, films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *A Room With a View* (1985), and *Howard's End* (1991). Here he picks out ways in which British films differ from their Hollywood counterparts, investigates different segments of the British film industry, offers some generalizations about the unique stylistic characteristics of British films, and speculates on the "cultural construction of distinctiveness and otherness" in the British film tradition. Again, he draws our attention to how no national cinema can be reduced to the films produced within a country and argues that, even if films do present a uniform articulation of national identity, audiences may choose to reject that vision. But this case-study method does clearly demonstrate the cultural and economic diversity of the British film industry, as well as point out how this industry wrestled with the dominant presence of American film-making within Britain for the past 100 years.

One of Higson's main problems, ironically, is the same one which faced British film-makers: Is his work of interest only to those involved with British film, or does he articulate issues of concern to film scholars in other areas of study as well? While the films in Higson's case studies may be unfamiliar to many readers, I fully believe this book will be valuable for all those concerned with how the cultural analysis of films relates to the films' economic context. Higson writes in a clear and accessible manner, one which conveys the complexity of his subject matter without forcing his readers to have graduate degrees in film theory. In addition, his knowledge of production history, grasp of film aesthetics, and insightful interpretations make the connections between economics and art simply fascinating.

LESTER D. FRIEDMAN

■ Lester D. Friedman teaches at Syracuse University; he is the author of *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism.*

Book Note

Contributor to Book Notes: James L. Neibaur is a film historian.

Miller, Mark A. *Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing and Horror Cinema: A Filmography of Their 22 Collaborations*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Company, 1995. $45.00. Whether or not one is a fan, or student, of the horror film, this certainly is among the finest book-length studies of that oft-discussed subgenre. While many horror film buffs swear by the Universal productions, and others have a sentimental attachment to the 50s space adventures and Roger Corman quickies, there is a strong cult surrounding the Hammer films, especially *Horror of Dracula* (1958). Lee and Cushing are the British counterparts to American film actors Boris Karloff (who was himself English) and Bela Lugosi (Hungarian-born). This book examines their individual lives and careers separately, then carefully analyzes each of the 22 films they made together, from *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Hammer, 1957) to the unfortunate *House of Long Shadows* (Cannon, 1983). It also includes what the author refers to as their fortuitous pairing in Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948) and John Huston's *Moulin Rouge* (1952).

One of the truly impressive aspects of this study is Miller's examinations of the literary background of films like *Hamlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1959; which the author claims is the definitive Sherlock Holmes). It is this thorough understanding of the subject matter that makes even the chapters on weak films like *Horror Express* and *Nothing But The Night* (both 1972) fascinating reading, while Miller's comments on *The*

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Creeping Flesh (also 1972) are convincing enough to warrant another look at that movie.

The book concludes with chapters on more recent years in each actor's career and an epilogue culled from a journal the author kept while doing research in England.

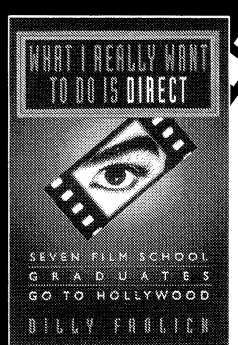
Perhaps the author's greatest coup was his extensive interviews with both Cushing (who died shortly after the manuscript had gone to press) and Lee. It is these first-hand accounts that bring more perception and greater depth to the already thorough analysis provided for each film.

JAMES L. NEIBAUR

The Book Review section of *FQ* is a vital part of the journal and one that our readers, so they tell us, especially value. We are the only journal that tries to review all major scholarly film-related books. We have no theoretical or ideological ax to grind and pride ourselves on representing a variety of viewpoints. Because we regularly cover so many books, we always need qualified writers. If you would like to be considered as a book reviewer, please let us know your areas of interest and relevant qualifications, background, or experience. Send this information to the Book Review Editor, Stephen Prince, Dept. of Communication Studies, Virginia Tech, 11 Agnew Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0311. Fax: 540-231-9817.

A.M.

CINEMATIC VIEWS



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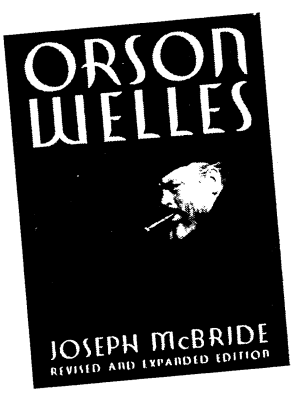

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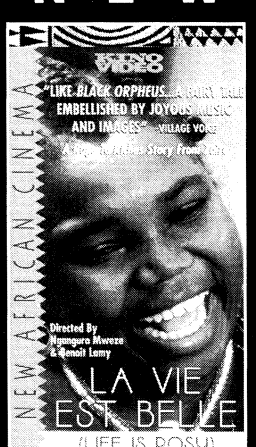

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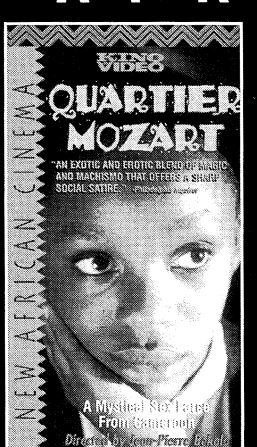

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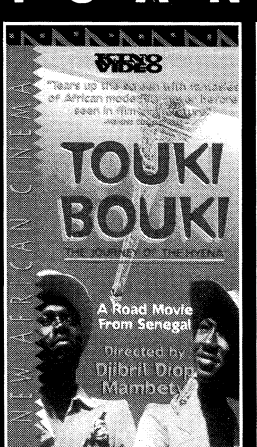

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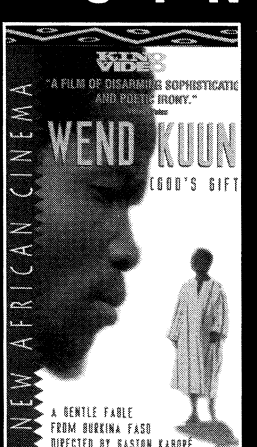

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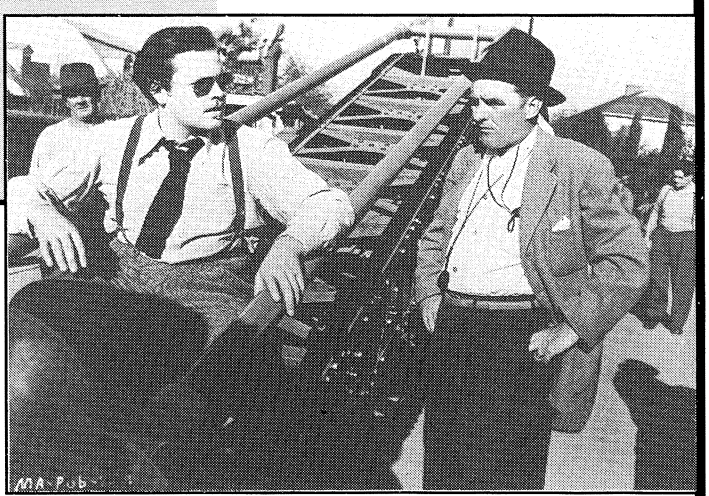

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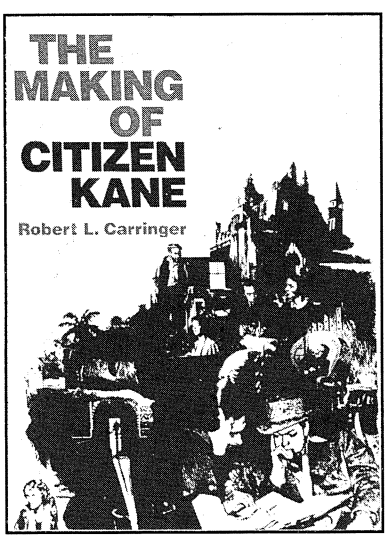

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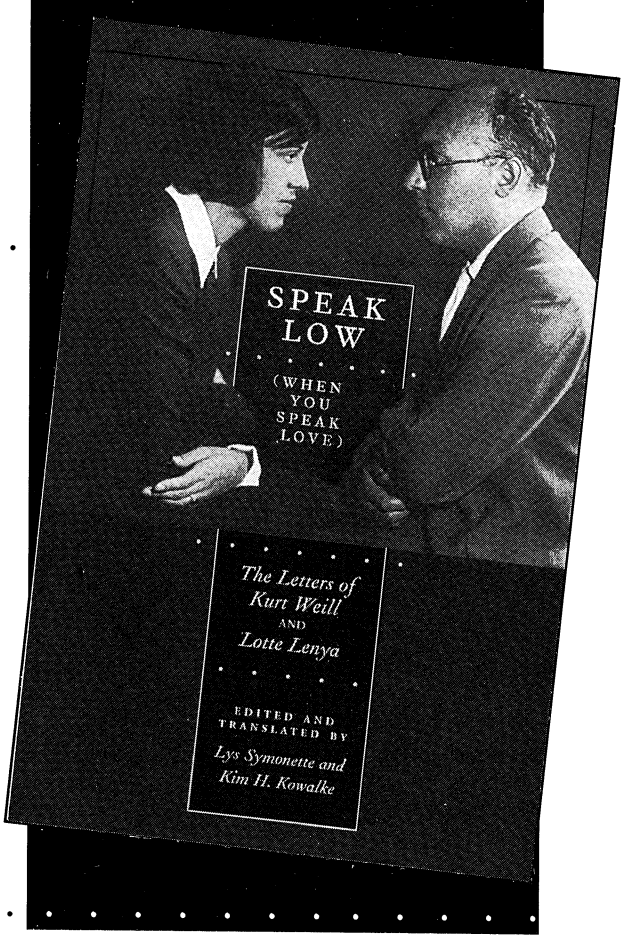

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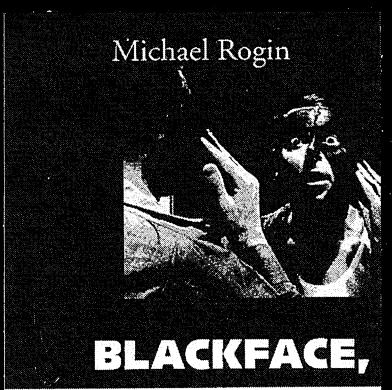

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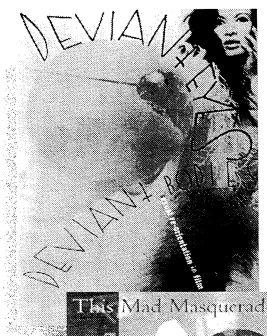

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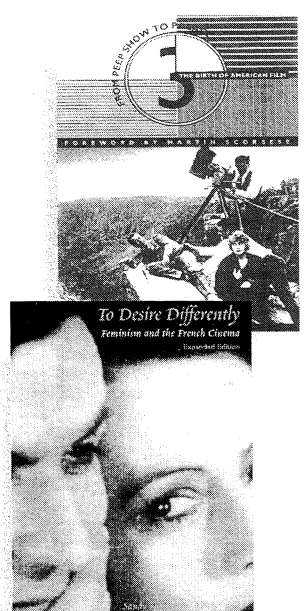

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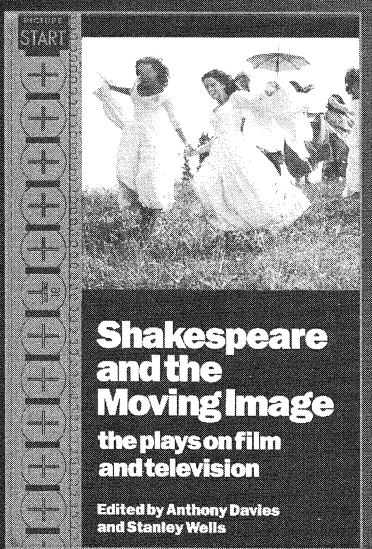

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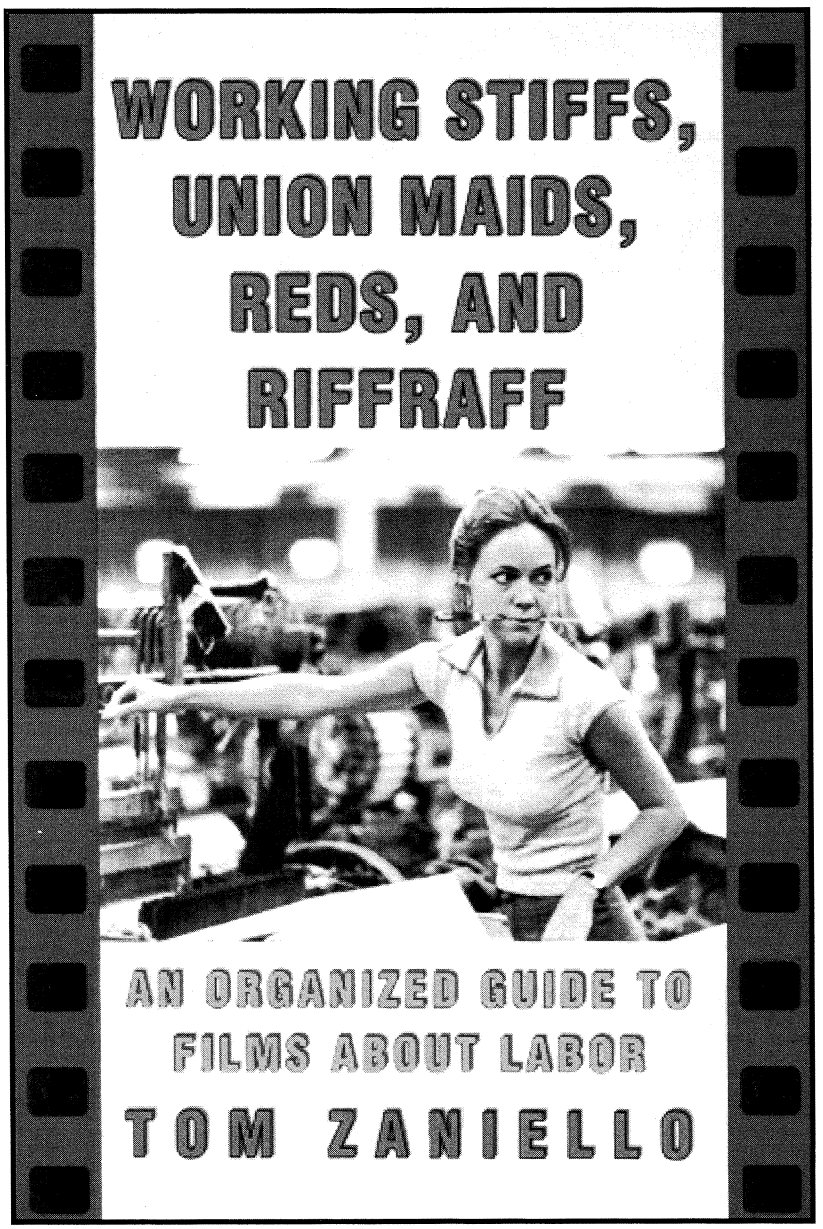

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